GARY ROSSINGTON

FAREWELL TO LYNYRD SKYNYRD'S LAST FOUNDING MEMBER

★CLASSIC★ ROCK

+

KANSAS

IAN HUNTER

JETHRO TULL

DEF LEPPARD

RICK WAKEMAN

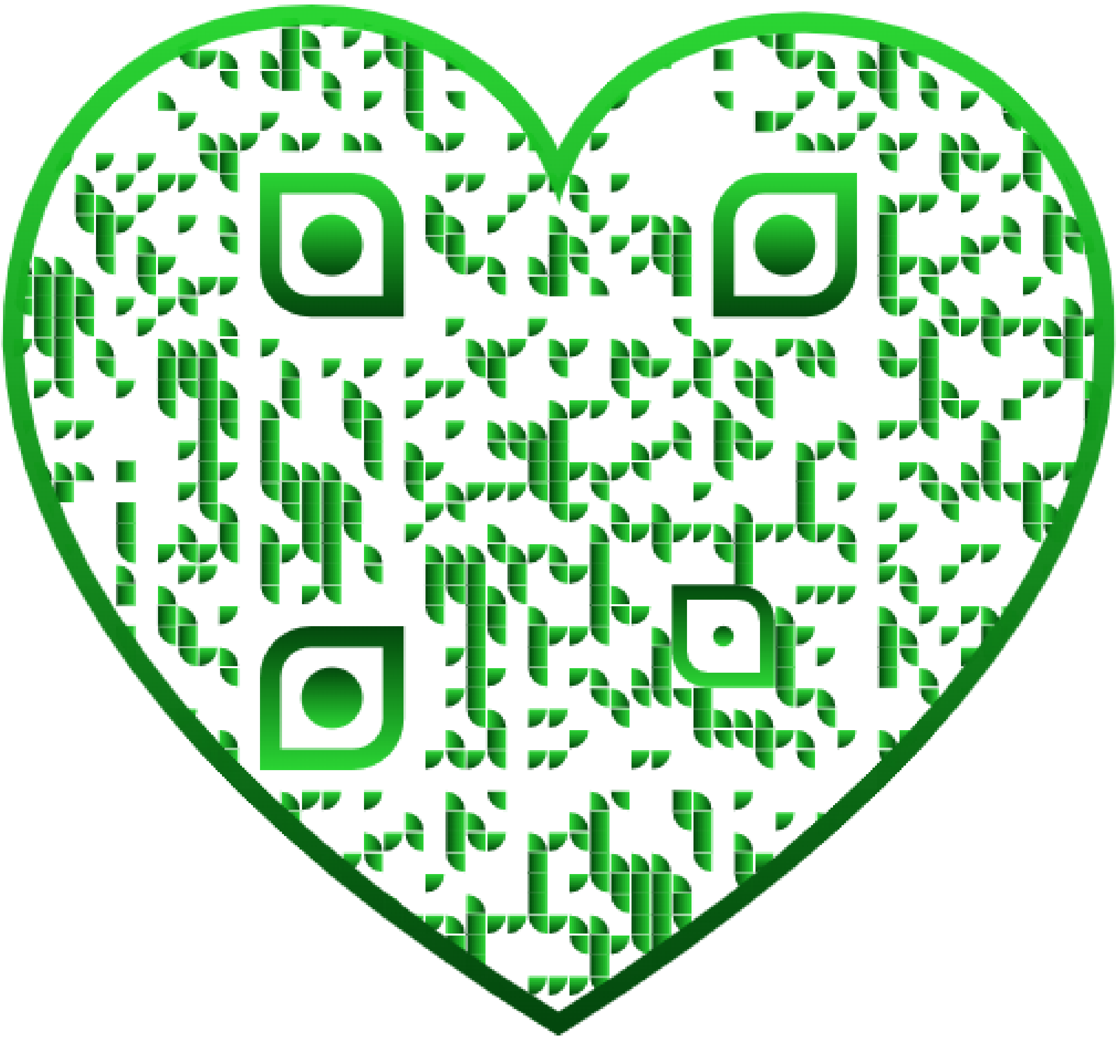
FUTURE

ISSUE 313

"We may not have as much time as we once thought"

METALLICA

AND THE ART OF SURVIVAL



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These days, the release of new Metallica music to the world is A. Very. Big. Deal. To share a little 'inside baseball' story, just getting our writer to hear *72 Seasons* ahead of our cover interview involved planes, trains and automobiles. And a surreptitious meeting. Probably under the cover of darkness... It was worth the wait, though, as Lars, Kirk and Rob spilled the beans on the state of the Metalli-nation in 2023.

This month we also collar the inestimable and unstoppable Ian Hunter for the Classic Rock Interview (p38); spent some time at Abbey Road Studios with Def Leppard while they were working on their orchestral album (p56); talk to a cast of thousands (well, almost) to tell the 50-years-and-counting tale of Kansas (p62); chat to Ian Anderson about the end of the world and other things (p48); pay tribute to the late, great Gary Rossington, the last original member of Lynyrd Skynrd, who sadly passed away shortly before we went to press (p8). And there's much, much more.

Until next month...

Siân Llewellyn, Editor

THE COVER: TIM SACCENTI

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This month's contributors

PAUL REES

Paul first interviewed Metallica's Lars Ulrich more than 32 years ago, and this month caught up with him again for our cover story (p28). These days Paul lives on the Isle of Skye, and his two most recent books are an authorised biography of The Who's former bass player the late John Entwistle, and one on John Mellencamp. His new book, *Shooting Star: The Definitive Story Of Elliott Smith* is due in August.

JAMES SHARROCK

Photographer James blames Slash for his entire career. "As a country kid in Australia, I saw Guns N' Roses tour *Appetite For Destruction* in 1988 when I was 12," he says. "That resulted in a 23-year career working as a music photographer and video director." This issue he shot DeWolff for us (p52). You can learn more about him and buy prints at jamessharrock.com

SCOTT ROWLEY

Scott was Ed in Chief of *CR* from 2004-14, and is currently Content Director of Music at Future. An Ian Hunter/Mott fan from the age of 12, this issue he spoke to Ian for the Classic Rock Interview (p38). "Ian kills me," he says. "Funny, down-to-earth and a consistently brilliant songwriter in a sea of underachievers. I don't understand why his songs aren't on permanent rotation on the radio. Maybe his new album will change that."

CLASSIC ROCK

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GARY ROSSINGTON

December 4, 1951 - March 5, 2023

We look back at the life, times and music of the Lynyrd Skynyrd guitarist who survived the band's plane crash in 1977, and also survived all the band's other founder members.

Words: **Dave Ling**

There's a commonly used phrase about living one's life on 'borrowed time'. And it applied to Gary Rossington more than most. In surviving Lynyrd Skynyrd's plane crash on October 20, 1977, the guitarist was given an extra 46 years to live. Six members of the iconic southern rock group and support team – frontman Ronnie Van Zant, guitarist Steve Gaines, backing singer Cassie Gaines, assistant road manager Dean Kilpatrick and pilot and co-pilot Walter McCreary and William John Gray – were not so fortunate.

A God-fearing man like Rossington might even say that the Lord had handed second lives to him, fellow guitarist Allen Collins, bassist Leon Wilkeson, keyboard player Billy Powell, drummer Artimus Pyle and backing singer Leslie Hawkins.

In the short term and over the decades that followed, the crash affected each of the survivors in different ways. For Billy Powell, a long-term victim of bullying from the hot-headed Van Zant, whose strong-arm tactics had quite literally knocked the fledgling band from students at the Robert E Lee High School into arena-headlining shape, his immediate knee-jerk reaction was one of relief.

"As time went by I'd kinda forgiven Ronnie for [knocking out] my teeth, but right before the plane crash I was getting fed up with it all," Powell told me in a 2003 interview. "When that plane came down, I wasn't knocked unconscious like all the rest. One of my first thoughts was: 'Thank God it's over – I don't have to get beaten up any more.' It didn't last long. Of course, I wanted the beating to stop, but not like it did."

> **"We'd started playing small dance halls, now suddenly we were opening for the Stones and The Who."**
>
> **Gary Rossington**

In later life, after the band broke up – seemingly for good – Artimus Pyle, who with injuries including broken ribs had crawled from the crash site through the woods to seek help, became a pilot. This was doubly impressive considering the drummer's father had also perished in an aviation disaster.

Gary Rossington, who had steel rods put in his right arm and right leg, responded by becoming more driven than before. He and Collins formed the Rossington Collins Band, where Gary met the love of his life and future wife, the group's lead singer Dale Kranz. Also featuring Wilkeson and Powell, the Rossington Collins Band helped the survivors, set to have included Pyle until a motorbike accident, to pick up the pieces.

Over a long period of time the survivors were able to put aside their differences and also to thrash out an agreement with Van Zant's widow Judy that would allow the Free Bird to fly again, with Ronnie's younger brother Johnny at the mic. From 1991 onwards the rebooted Skynyrd began releasing new music in addition to touring the world. One by one the classic-era alumni either left or died, but Rossington, who in 2019 became the last founding member following the passing of original bassist Larry Jungstrom, vowed to continue performing the music of his old friends.

However, on March 5, 2023, at the age of 71, Rossington's ailing body gave up the fight. A statement said: "Gary is now with his Skynyrd brothers and family in heaven and playing it pretty, like he always does. Please keep Dale, [daughters] Mary and Annie and the entire Rossington family in your prayers and respect their privacy at this difficult time." ▷

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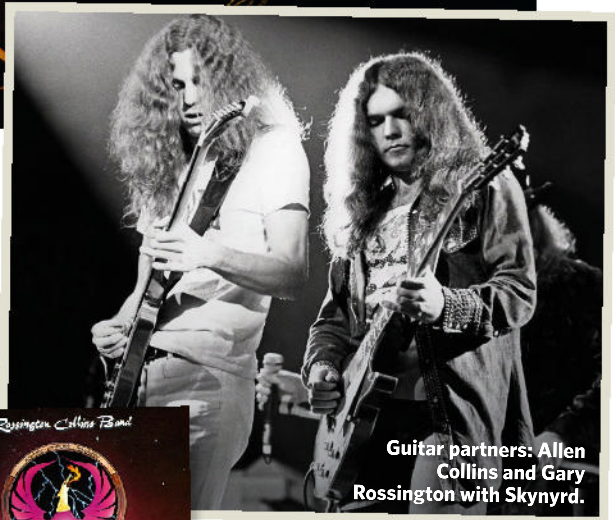
Despite Skynyrd's successes, life in the band for Rossington was often tough.

Ronnie Van Zant and Rossington with Skynyrd at Knebworth, August 21, 1976.



Guitar partners: Allen Collins and Gary Rossington with Skynyrd.

Gary Robert Rossington was born in Jacksonville, Florida on December 4, 1951. Along with schoolmates Ronnie Van Zant, Allen Collins, Larry Jungstrom and drummer Bob Burns he co-founded the Noble Five. There were several earlier names including The One Per Cent and My Backyard before, in defiance of Leonard Skinner, the gym teacher that persecuted them for their long hair, it was changed for a final time.

A violent, tyrannical boozer, Van Zant was Skynyrd's undisputed leader. Indeed the singer once claimed: "I hand-picked all these boys to play for me." The fatherless Rossington gravitated towards Ronnie in spite of the unpredictable rages.

Expanded to a six-piece with Billy Powell on keyboards, they signed to MCA Records, and in 1973 released their debut, *Pronounced 'Leh-'nérd 'Skin-'nérd*. Buoyed by the popularity of its closing track, *Free Bird*, which clocked in at more than nine minutes, the sextet enjoyed instant success, although out on the road they fought for every square inch of territory – sometimes quite literally.

Their tales from this period of brawling, boozing and chasing women became legion, and often inspired songs, such as *I Ain't The One, Gimme Three Steps, On The Hunt* and *Don't Ask Me No Questions*. Zero apologies were offered for the band's rural upbringings or their hirsute look, and when Skynyrd walked into a hotel bar, fireworks were always likely. At an early gig in New York, Mountain guitarist Leslie West deputised after Rossington broke his hand in a fist fight.

Raised on and accustomed to violence, here was a band that backed down for no man. Throw in booze and drugs, and dark goings-on became possible. When Skynyrd opened for The Who on the US leg of a tour for 1973's *Quadrophenia* album, the headliners' distressed manager Bill Curbishley later recalled: "The tour manager rang to say: 'There's trouble in the hotel. It's not just smashing up a room… Lynyrd Skynyrd have skinned a cat!'"

And yet there was a whole other side to the band, fostered by its blue-collar roots. Writer John Ingham, from the British music weekly *Sounds,* met them in Glasgow and joined the entourage to watch a middle-of-the-road, Carpenters-style band in the bar. When a record company employee made a disparaging comment, Van Zant scolded: "They're musicians. They're working. Show them respect."

Skynyrd line-ups came and went, but their triple-guitar sound remained a constant.

"It was an incredible time, we were selling out everywhere," Rossington told me in 2003. "We'd started playing small dance halls for a few hundred people, now suddenly we were opening for the Stones and The Who. But then we started to do cocaine. And I hate myself for that now."

In September 1976, two weeks after scaring the living daylights out of the Stones at Knebworth Park ("Skynyrd caused a real buzz backstage," remembered promoter Freddy Bannister. "We all wondered how anyone could follow them"), Rossington almost killed himself. Wiped out on bourbon and numbed by sedatives, he had fallen asleep at the wheel of his Ford Torino and took down a telegraph pole. The incident inspired the immortal opening lines of the song *That Smell* (*'Whiskey bottles, and brand new cars, oak tree you're in my way/There's too much coke and too much smoke, look what's going on inside you'*). Skynyrd being Skynyrd, after their tour was postponed due to such stupidity, Rossington's bandmates demanded he shell out $5,000 to cover lost income.

With the ludicrously talented Steve Gaines replacing Ed King in their three-man guitar team, Lynyrd Skynyrd had been poised to join the biggest acts in the world with their fifth studio album, *Street Survivors*. Everybody knows what happened next. A mere three days after its release on October 17, 1977, the band's Convair 240 turbo-prop plane crashed into swampy woods near Gillsburg, Mississippi.

"For a long time I wouldn't talk about the plane crash," Rossington sighed during our 2003 conversation. "It hurt to keep going back to it in interviews. After I spoke about it, I'd have the blues for the rest of the day. Then I would go out and get drunk. But I've realised that it's part of my career."

Of course, after the band reconvened in 1987, flying was a necessary evil.

"Right after the crash, I actually had to fly to

MAIN: MICK HUTSON; GETTY x2

Skynyrd in '76: (l-r) Leon Wilkeson, Artimus Pyle, Billy Powell, Allen Collins (top), Ronnie Van Zant (seated), Gary Rossington, Steve Gaines.

"A lot of my bones were broken and they ache a lot. I'm so glad that I don't drink any more. I couldn't do that and work."
Gary Rossington

two or three different hospitals for special operations, so I was flying again the very next day," Rossington said. "It's like having a bicycle accident when you're a kid, you have to get right back on."

Johnny Van Zant would prove to be a great fit, but for Skynyrd rediscovering their mojo was far tougher. They made a series of inconsistent albums until they brought in Rickey Medlocke, formerly the guitarist with Blackfoot and an early drummer with Skynyrd, in 1996. A late-career purple patch included the albums *Vicious Cycle, God & Guns* and the tellingly titled *Last Of A Dying Breed* (all released in the 2000s). In the summer of 2003, Skynyrd underlined their return once and for all with a co-headline tour with Deep Purple. At its London date Rossington and company went on first, and blew Purple clean out of the Arena's doors.

"At the beginning I had my doubts about [the reunion]," Rossington told *Classic Rock*. "I thought: 'I'll see Ronnie again one day, I don't want him to whup my ass.' But as the years went by I realised it was the right thing to do. I promise you, he used to say: 'If anything should happen to me, keep the band going.'"

Rossington insisted that before the plane crash Ronnie Van Zant had been considering stepping aside from Skynyrd and handing the mic to his younger brother. "I swear that was going to happen," he said. "Ronnie's throat was getting so sore on the last record and tour, he dreamt of retiring and writing songs with us and managing us, letting Johnny come sing."

Rossington defied fading health to remain on the road. "I'm in my mid-sixties. I've got a bad heart and I get pains in my legs [a legacy of the plane crash]," he told us in 2017. "A lot of my bones were broken and they ache a lot. I've got arthritis, too. I'm so glad that I don't drink any more. I couldn't do that and work."

However, he was still blissfully married to Skynyrd's long-term backing singer Dale Kranz-Rossington and in a good place mentally.

"I love to go fishing with my grandkids, I do that a lot," he said, smiling. "Dale and I live in Atlanta, but we've a second home in the countryside that's right next to Yellowstone Park. It's like living in a postcard. If ▷

GETTY

GOODBYE TO THE LAST REBEL

"Another legend and friend has passed away. Rest in peace and thanks for being so nice to me over the years."
Joe Bonamassa

"ZZ Top facilitated getting Lynyrd Skynyrd on the bill with us at a South Carolina date in '73. It was the start of an enduring friendship. Gary's extraordinary ability as a guitarist was nothing less than inspirational."
Billy F Gibbons

"Gary was not only a great guitar player, he composed a lot of the classic guitar melodies that Lynyrd Skynyrd is known for and he co-wrote so many of their timeless songs. Great party music, but those songs have an emotional depth to keep them alive for decades to come."
Warren Haynes

"Gary's place in music history is rock-solid. He will be missed forever. Fly on fly high, our Free Bird brother."
Artimus Pyle

"I am numb… this cuts deep."
Paul Rodgers

"Thank you for bringing me so much joy with your guitar playing and songwriting in one of my all-time favourite bands, Lynyrd Skynyrd."
James Hetfield

"God bless Gary Rossington."
Zakk Wylde

"This really hurt. I grew up always thinking Gary just looked like the coolest dude, with his Les Paul slung way down low."
Ryan McGarvey

"I've many fond memories sharing the stage with Gary. As the last surviving member of the group he helped form, I can relate to the impact it will have on the band's fans everywhere."
Henry Paul, The Outlaws

"Early on Journey opened for Skynyrd, they took us under their wings and the chemistry worked very well with their audience. God bless, brother."
Neal Schon

"I'm heartbroken! Gary was not only a dear friend, but a collaborator. My heart goes out to Dale and the girls. RIP."
Travis Tritt

"Gary was one of the best ever. I thank him and Skynyrd for all the great memories on the road over the years."
Kenny Wayne Shepherd

"These grand architects are leaving us too quickly. Rest easy Gary, you touched so many people on an incalculable level."
Devon Allman

The Skynyrd family in November 2014: (l-r) Carol Chase, Johnny Colt, Johnny Van Zant, Peter Keys, Gary Rossington, Rickey Medlocke, Dale Rossington, Michael Cartellone, Mark 'Sparky' Matejka.

"Gary was not only a great guitar player, he composed a lot of the classic guitar melodies that Lynyrd Skynyrd is known for and he co-wrote so many of their timeless songs." Warren Haynes

the grandkids are there then we'll watch them play soccer and baseball. That's my idyllic Sunday afternoon."

Being a grandparent made him especially proud, and in later interview with *Classic Rock* he added wistfully how the experience was "like a second chance".

The events of 1977 still weighed on Rossington's mind, although he had come to peace with what happened all those years ago.

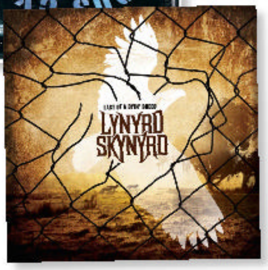
"The plane crash and my health issues all make me realise that life is short, and that it can all be taken away from you in a split second. Every day is precious," he continued. "I find it frustrating to see people wandering around with their faces stuck up against their phones."

Rossington hated seeing his contemporaries pass away, aware that Skynyrd and bands like them were, to quote a familiar album title, the last of a dying breed. "Pretty soon there won't be anybody left that's like us," he reflected sadly.

Consequently he made a concerted effort to fly the flag for the next generation of southern bands. At an open-air gig in 2018, Wisconsin-born guitarist and vocalist Jared James Nichols was astonished when he realised that Rossington and Medlock were at the side of the stage observing him play. Summoned to an audience with the headliners, he was offered further Skynyrd supports.

"I went from playing the smallest bars to ice-hockey stadiums," Nichols tells *Classic Rock*. "Gary and Rickey would watch my show and then offer advice, which led to me sitting in Gary's dressing room, talking and drinking. On the last night they invited me to jam on *Sweet Home Alabama*. With a wink, Gary insisted I take the solo."

By contrast, when Black Stone Cherry toured with Skynyrd in 2013 their lead singer and guitarist Chris Robertson was too shy and nervous to talk to his hero. "I kick myself now," he says. "But I can't tell you how proud I am that a song I had a hand in writing [*Life's Twisted*] is on a Lynyrd Skynyrd record that I've got at my house [*Last Of A Dying Breed*]."



Rossington suffered a heart attack in 2015, and had to endure various operations. Lingering cardiac issues would eventually force him to sit out shows with his beloved band on their 50th-anniversary tour.

Having struck up a friendship with Medlocke when his own group Brother Cain opened for Blackfoot in 1993, former Thin Lizzy and Black Star Riders guitarist Damon Johnson was intimidated yet thrilled when Skynyrd asked him to deputise. "If only it was under better circumstances," he sighed to *Classic Rock*. "This was in June of 2021. What started as six shows turned into six weeks, and then six months of weekends."

When Rossington returned to work it was decided that Johnson should take the first half of a show, with Gary joining for the run-in.

"Sadly we never got to do one show like that," Johnson says. "Gary and Dale joined us on the road maybe four times and he would just play *Sweet Home Alabama* and *Free Bird*. And when he did, Gary wanted me to stay up there with them."

In 2017, when asked whether Skynyrd could continue after his passing, Rossington gave a political answer: "We're about keeping alive the music made by Ronnie, Allen, myself and all the rest, but once I'm gone… I won't have a say," he said with a laugh. "It's an unanswerable question."

As this issue went to press, Skynyrd *were* set to play on, at a festival in Florida without Gary just a week after his death.

"The reason we are doing this is Gary's wife, now his widow," explains Damon Johnson, who retains his stand-in status. "Dale *wants* us to do it in celebration of Gary. All of the other stuff – the big decisions – can be figured out later."

It makes sense for the ethics of a Lynyrd Skynyrd with no original members to be debated at a less sensitive moment. In the meantime, let's bid farewell to one of the great southern gents. Thank you for the music, Gary. ●

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DEF LEPPARD | VAN HALEN
STATUS QUO | KORN

AC/DC EXPERIENCE | METAL MILITIA | POPESTARS
LINK N PARK | TOXICITIES | SPOUKY KIDS | IFFY CLYRO
MEGADETH UK | EZ TOP | MOTLEY CRUDE | DEF LEPPED
VAN HAILEN | STATE OF QUO | KORN AGAIN

SUN 28TH MAY

TRIBUTES TO:
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RADIOHEAD | RED HOT CHILI PEPPERS
KATE BUSH | FATBOY SLIM
CHIC | INXS | THE CURE | THE POLICE
NOEL GALLAGHER | BOY GEORGE

QUEENESQUE | THE KILLAZ UK | MAINLY MADNESS
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BIFFY CLYRO | STATUS QUO
KORN | RAGE AGAINST THE MACHINE

WHOLE LOTTA DC | METAL MILITIA | PANTERA UK
POPESTARS | ROBBED ZOMBIE | LINK N PARK | SPOUKY KIDS
MEGADETH UK | SELF REVOLUTION | EZ TOP | STATE OF QUO
IFFY CLYROE | KORN AGAIN | MACHINE RAGES ON

SUN 18TH JUNE

TRIBUTES TO:
QUEEN | THE KILLERS | MADNESS
ELVIS | RED HOT CHILI PEPPERS
THE CHEMICAL BROTHERS | FATBOY SLIM
DAFT PUNK | ALANIS MORISSETTE
THE SMITHS | THE POLICE
QUEENS OF THE STONEAGE | BLINK182

QUEENESQUE | THE KILLAZ UK | MAINLY MADNESS
TOMMY HOLLAND AND RISING SUN BAND
RED HOT CHILI PEPPERS UK | CHEMICAL DANCE | FATBOY KIDD
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RAGE AGAINST THE MACHINE | KORN
PEARL JAM | STATUS QUO | AUDIO SLAVES

GUNS OR ROSES | PANTERA UK | METAL MILITIA
POPESTARS | ROBBED ZOMBIE | NIRVANA UK
ANGRY HAIR | LINK N PARK | EZ TOP | SELF REVOLUTION
SPOUKY KIDS | MACHINE RAGES ON | KORN AGAIN
PEARL SCAM | STATE OF QUO | AUDIO SLAVES

SUN 9TH JULY

TRIBUTES TO:
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ELVIS | RED HOT CHILI PEPPERS
THE CHEMICAL BROTHERS | FATBOY SLIM
DAFT PUNK | PET SHOP BOYS | THE POLICE
THE SMITHS | QUEENS OF THE STONEAGE
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ROB ZOMBIE | SYSTEM OF A DOWN
RAGE AGAINST THE MACHINE
BLACK SABBATH | STATUS QUO
NIRVANA | ZZ TOP

MORDENSTEIN | GUNS OR ROSES | METAL MILITIA | NIN UK
HI ON MAIDEN | SPOUKY KIDS | LINK N PARK | ROBBED ZOMBIE
TOXICITIES | MACHINE RAGES ON | SACK SABBATH
STATE OF QUO | NIRVANA UK | EZ TOP

SUN 30TH JULY

TRIBUTES TO:
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RED HOT CHILI PEPPERS | THE KILLERS
THE CHEMICAL BROTHERS | KATE BUSH
THE CURE | ELVIS | PINK FLOYD
THE POLICE | THE SMITHS
MAINLY MADNESS | ALANIS MORISSETTE

FLEETWOOD BAC | FU FIGHTERS
EXPLOSIVE LIGHT ORCHESTRA | RED HOT CHILLI PEPPERS UK
THE KILLAZ UK | CHEMICAL DANCE | MOMENTS OF PLEASURE
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MARILYN MANSON | STATUS QUO
RAGE AGAINST THE MACHINE

GUNS OR ROSES | METAL MILITIA | POPESTARS | NIN UK
ROBBED ZOMBIE | NERDVANA | DRESSED TO KILL | EZ TOP
IFFY CLYRO | DIZZY LIZZY | SPOUKY KIDS
STATE OF QUO | MACHINE RAGES ON

SUN 27TH AUG

TRIBUTES TO:
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ELVIS | RED HOT CHILI PEPPERS
THE CHEMICAL BROTHERS | THE POLICE
RADIOHEAD | DAFT PUNK | BEASTIE BOYS
THE BEATLES | THE SMITHS
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the DIRT

RIP

Thank you... and good night.

Michael Rhodes

September 16, 1953 – March 4, 2023

Joe Bonamassa and Beth Hart were among those to mourn the passing of the popular bassist, whose work appeared on albums from Steve Winwood, Larry Carlton and more. "I cannot even process this right," commented Bonamassa, calling Michael Rhodes "one of the greatest to ever pick up a bass." Added Hart: "You brought my soul UP UP UP!" The 69-year-old died of pancreatic cancer.

Bruce Barthol

November 11, 1947 – February 20, 2023

The original bassist for Country Joe And The Fish has died of unreported cause at 75. California-born Bruce Barthol appeared on the first three albums from the Bay Area psychedelic-folk-rock band, released between 1967 and '68. He also played with the groups Formerly Fat Harry and Energy Crisis, releasing one solo album, *The Decline And Fall Of Everything*, in 2008.

Alex Napier

Died January 19, 2023

Uriah Heep leader Mick Box has paid tribute to the Glaswegian drummer who featured on the band's debut album, 1970's *...Very 'Eavy... Very 'Umble*. Alex Napier was a member of Heep for four years, leaving due to family commitments. "Alex was at the very beginning of our journey with Uriah Heep playing drums on our very first album, and he will always be remembered for that," said the guitarist.

Phil Spalding

November 19, 1957 – February 5, 2023

Besides being a member of the prog supergroup GTR, featuring Steve Hackett and Steve Howe, London-born session-man Spalding played bass for The Who, Mick Jagger, Roger Taylor, Joe Cocker, Roger Chapman, Bernie Tormé, Mike Oldfield and Elton John among many others. Asia's Geoffrey Downes called him "a very talented bass guitarist and all-round great guy". Spalding was 65 years old.

Steve Mackey

November 10, 1966 – March 2, 2023

The bassist of indie rockers Pulp has died of an undisclosed illness. He was 56 years old. Steve Mackey joined Pulp in 1989, playing on every studio album from 1992's *Separations* onwards. Last year the bassist announced that he would not be participating in the band's reunion shows. Frontman Jarvis Cocker paid tribute and described Mackey as "our beloved friend".

SPOT

July 1, 1951 – March 4, 2023

Born in Los Angeles, Glenn Lockett – nicknamed SPOT – was the in-house producer for influential US punk label SST Records, working on records from Back Flag, Hüsker Dü, Descendents, Minutemen, and more. The 72-year-old had been hospitalised following a stroke.

Victor Brox

May 5, 1941 – February 20, 2023

British blues musician and singer Brox worked with Jimi Hendrix, Eric Clapton, John Mayall and many more, as well as writing the song *The Warning* which was recorded by Black Sabbath on their debut album. Survived by his singing daughter Kyla, he was 81 years old.

Wayne Shorter

August 25, 1933 – March 2, 2023

Regarded as among the all-time great saxophonists, Wayne Shorter (pictured) made his name in the 1960s playing with Miles Davis. In the following decade he was a member the jazz-fusion combo Weather Report, also working with Joni Mitchell, Carlos Santana and Don Henley. Shorter was 89 years old at the time of his death.

Tom Whitlock

February 20, 1954 – February 18, 2023

American composer Tom Whitlock wrote *Take My Breath Away* (the *Top Gun* soundtrack hit for Berlin), in addition to songs for Sammy Hagar, Kenny Loggins, and others. Whitlock was 68 when he died from complications of Alzheimer's disease.

Burt Bacharach

May 12, 1928 – February 8, 2023

Burt Bacharach has died of natural causes at his home in Los Angeles, California, at the age of 94. With a string of universally known smash hits that includes *I Say A Little Prayer For You, Raindrops Keep Falling On My Head, Walk On By, I'll Never Fall In Love Again, What's New Pussycat, 24 Hours From Tulsa, What The World Needs Now Is Love* and *Make It Easy On Yourself* to name just a handful of examples, Bacharach was one of the finest ever songwriters.

From the 1950s onwards, often in conjuction with songwriting partner Hal David, Bacharach wrote a seemingly unstoppable conveyor belt of material for Gene Pitney, Dionne Warwick, Tom Jones, The Walker Brothers, Manfred Mann, Rod Stewart, Neil Diamond, Cilla Black and Elvis Costello, among many, many more. His songs became part of the fabric of popular music.

Born in Kansas City, Missouri, the teenaged Bacharach cut his teeth in the nightclubs of New York, soaking up performances from jazz greats such as Dizzy Gillespie and Charlie Parker. After serving in the army he began to write songs, launching his professional relationship with Hal David in 1957 after they met in New York's fabled hothouse of composition The Brill Building.

Gradually the duo found traction, with *Magic Moments* taking off in the hands of Perry Como. Bacharach went on to notch more than 70 Top 40 singles in America, winning six Grammys. The pair's music was also performed by The Beatles, Elvis Presley and The Carpenters. Let's not forgot that they won three Oscars for music used in the movies *Arthur* and *Butch Cassidy And The Sundance Kid*.

Bacharach continued to write music into his old age, collaborating with the likes of Elvis Costello, Adele and rapper Dr. Dre.

Paul McCartney said: "Burt's songs were an inspiration to people like me. I met him on a couple of occasions and he was a very kind and talented man who will be missed by us all. His songs were distinctive and different from many others in the sixties and seventies."

Dionne Warwick stated that Bacharach's passing "felt like losing a family member".

Meanwhile, Thunder guitarist Luke Morley tweeted: "Goodbye to one of the greatest. The songs that Burt wrote with Hal David had such emotional depth."

David Lindley

March 21, 1944 – March 3, 2023

It's entirely possible that you may not be familiar with the name David Lindley, but lovers of soft-rock from the 1970s will certainly be familiar with his music. The multi-instrumentalist and guitarist didn't simply accompany bigger names such as James Taylor, Ry Cooder, Bonnie Raitt, Warren Zevon and David Crosby & Graham Nash, his contribution to albums such as Jackson Browne's *Running On Empty*, also Rod Stewart's *Atlantic Crossing* and *A Night On The Town*, helped to shape the sound of an era. The guitarist also played violin, upright and electric bass, banjo, mandolin, dobro, zither and bouzouki.

After Lindley passed away at 78 following an unspecified month-long illness, Graham Nash wrote on Instagram: "David could play pretty much any instrument you put in front of him with incredible versatility and expression. He was truly a musician's musician and has been admired with awe and respect for such a long time now."

Peter Frampton called him "a giant among musicians… his unique sound and style gave him away in one note."

Joe Bonamassa said simply: "David Lindley changed the game for all of us."

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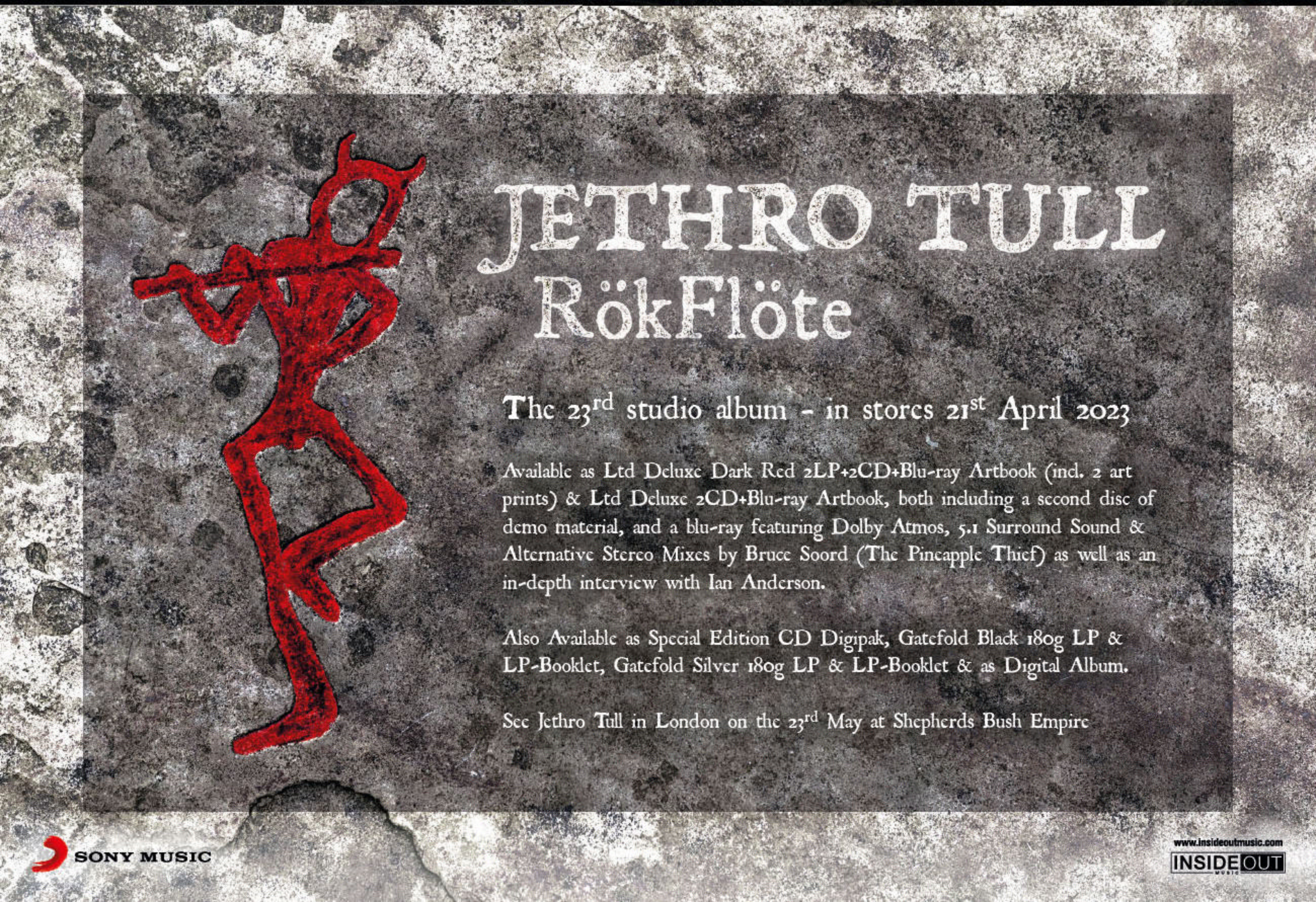
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An important calendar date since 2008, Record Store Day has something for all musical tastes, from Van Halen to Siouxsie And The Banshees to Tangerine Dream. Here's just a small selection of this year's goodies, available in 260 independent record shops across the UK on Saturday, April 22. For more info and to find the participating shop closest to you, visit recordstoreday.co.uk

Black Sabbath – *Never Say Die!* (light blue splatter vinyl)
Graham Bonnet – *Line-Up* (red vinyl)
David Bowie – *Laughing With Liza: The Vocalion And Deram Singles 1964-1967* (five boxed singles)
The Cure – *Show* (picture disc)
The Donnas – *Message From The Donnas, The Early Singles* (metallic gold vinyl)
Emerson Lake & Palmer – *Brain Salad Surgery* (picture disc)
Fleetwood Mac – Albatross (12" single, red vinyl)
Gong – *Angel's Egg* (half-speed remaster)
Grateful Dead – *Boston Garden 5.7.77* (first time on vinyl)
Hawkwind – *The Iron Dream, Live 1977* (clear vinyl)
Joan Jett & The Blackhearts – *Up Your Alley* (lemonade coloured vinyl)
Elton John – *Don't Shoot Me I'm Only The Piano Player* (bonus disc of demos)
The Mars Volta – *Frances The Mute + The Widow Live* (specially mastered for vinyl)
Mötley Crüe – *Helter Skelter* (picture disc EP)
Motörhead – *The Lost Tapes, Vol 4* (concert from Germany 1984)
Mr. Big – *Mr .Big* (180-gram blue vinyl)
Bill Nelson – *Live At The De Montfort Hall, Leicester 1979* (red vinyl)
Stevie Nicks – *Bella Donna, Live 1981* (first time on vinyl)
Pearl Jam – *Give Way* (double-LP and CD)
Porcupine Tree – *IA / DW / XT* (12" single)
Ramones – *Pleasant Dreams, New York Sessions* (yellow vinyl)
The Rolling Stones – *Beggars Banquet* (grey, blue, black and white swirl vinyl)
Siouxsie & The Banshees – *A Kiss In The Dreamhouse* (clear and gold marbled vinyl)
Slade – *Keep Your Hands Off My Power Supply* (coloured vinyl)
Tangerine Dream – *Live In Paris, Palais Des Congrés* (boxed set)
Thin Lizzy – *Live And Dangerous, Hammersmith 14.11.76* (180-gram, gatefold sleeve)
UFO – *Will The Last man Standing (Turn Out The Light: The Best Of UFO)* (vinyl debut)
Van Halen – *Right Here, Right Now* (four LPs, with two bonus tracks)

NEWS

Mr. Big are to undertake a farewell tour, with Nick D'Virgilio of Big Big Train in place of drummer Pat Torpey, who died five years ago of Parkinson's disease. The tour opens in Japan in July and is scheduled to run for two years, hitting the UK in 2024.

James Hetfield is set to appear in a "dark western" film titled *The Thicket*, based on Joe R Lansdale's 2013 book of the same name. His role is yet to be announced.

Roger Waters has re-recorded Pink Floyd's *The Dark Side Of The Moon* without any of the group's current members. "Let's get rid of all this 'we' crap!" Waters explained to *The Telegraph*. "Of course we were a band, there were four of us, we all contributed – but it's my project and I wrote it. So... blah!"

The Black Crowes have released a new live record, *The Black Crowes: Shake Your Money Maker Live*, as a celebration of their ongoing reunion tour. Its 19 tracks include covers of the Rolling Stones' *It's Only Rock 'N' Roll (But I Like It)* and The Velvet Underground's *Rock & Roll*.

The original line-up of **The Almighty** – vocalist/guitarist Ricky Warwick (pictured), guitarist Andy 'Tantrum' McCafferty, bassist Floyd London and drummer Stumpy Monroe – will play three reunion shows in November and December, their first appearances together in 32 years. For dates see Tour Dates, p97.

WELCOME BACK

Last In Line

Vivian Campbell reboots his side band – "but it's a serious side band for me" – with album number three.

By Vivian Campbell's admission, Last In Line's career has been "a bit haphazard". Founded in 2012 by Def Leppard guitarist Campbell, his former-Dio bandmates Jimmy Bain (bass) and Vinnie Appice (drums), and vocalist Andrew Freeman as a Dio covers band, the LA-based group became a more serious concern when Italian hard rock label Frontiers reached out with the offer of a deal.

Bain's death in January 2016, less than a month before the release of the group's debut album *Heavy Crown*, was "a major kick in the nuts", Campbell recalls. But seven years on, with album number three, *Jericho*, primed for release, he's determined that Last In Line (now including former Ozzy Osbourne bassist Phil Soussan) should be given a fair hearing, and not dismissed as an inconsequential hobby. "It's a side band," he acknowledges, "but it's a serious side band for me."

Def Leppard have been busy in recent years, so was a third record from Last In Line ever in doubt?
It was always in my mind. At times, though we've certainly been doing the work, we've been treading water a little, not always being on the right stages, for the right ears and eyeballs. And obviously that's very much complicated by the fact that I'm in Def Leppard, and Andy, Phil and Vinnie have been very patient and understanding. But Last In Line is tremendously joyous, cathartic and important for me as a musician, and this record feels like a pivotal point.

So many records over the past few years have been conceived over Zoom calls. Was that the case with *Jericho*?
No. One thing we insist on in Last In Line is that we have to be in the room together when we cut the tracks, old-school, because that's how we did the early Dio records with Ronnie. We started this record in January 2020 in LA, intending to finish it that April, and then obviously covid happened and things got… discombobulated. It wasn't until February 2022 that we were able to get back into the studio, but that break only made the record stronger.

The album sounds like it could come have from the mind of the eighteen-year-old Vivian Campbell, in the sense that it has the feel of classic metal albums.
I'm happy you think that, because that's definitely what I'm looking for, that idea of going back to when I was sixteen/seventeen, murdering my Les Paul. I'm sixty years old now, but I still play like I'm sixteen, in my head.

> **"I'm sixty years old now, but I still play like I'm sixteen, in my head."**

Lyrically it seems like a dark album.
Aye, well, we live in anxious times. And without presuming to know exactly what Andy is singing about, he reflects that. I'm an eternal optimist, and if I were to offer to help out with lyrics I'd probably annoy him. I'd bring too much fucking sunshine!

If as a teenager you'd popped into Caroline Music in Belfast and bought a copy of *Jericho*, what do you think the teenage Vivian Campbell would have made of the record?
I like to think I'd have loved it. I used to buy records from Caroline Music based solely on the artwork, and then lose myself in this music I knew nothing about, listening in the dark, headphones on, totally immersed. In an ideal world that's how I'd love people to hear *Jericho*. If you're open to that, I promise we'll take you on a journey. **PB**

Jericho is out now via earMUSIC.

RICKY WARWICK: KEVIN NIXON/PRESS

HIGH HOPES

Elles Bailey

"I've never been interested in fame. I just want to make good music that can help people."

With the august influences of Raitt, Hart and May, Bailey's bluesy rock is winning hearts.

During her teens, Elles Bailey fronted an indie band. Born in the late 80s and raised on a mix of rock'n'roll, blues and country (plus a generous helping of Spice Girls and Backstreet Boys hits), the singer found herself on tour with noughties guitar-wave bands like Scouting For Girls. At one point they opened for pop megastars the Sugababes.

"They had a room for just their *shoes*," she recalls. "This is a legit, actual thing. I think they had about fifty pairs on tour with them."

Elles Bailey might look similarly glam in her press photos – the latest in a bluesy roots'n'roll career that's seen her lauded by 'Whispering' Bob Harris and festooned with awards – but this isn't *really* who she is. Makeup-free and hoarse voiced (post-gig) in a beanie hat, she's chilled, chatty company. On tour she's more likely to get excited about amazing sandwiches than drugs and hard liquor. Over lockdown she became a mother.

"At the age of eight, I thought being a rock star would be all limos and parties," says Elles. "I'm exceedingly glad that it is actually nothing like that. I like my privacy. I'm glad that I found a really nice balance in my career. It doesn't involve limos, but I can live with that."

The daughter of a used car salesman and a teacher, Elles grew up in Bristol surrounded by music. Her mother sang while her father played guitar in a pub band, covering Rolling Stones and Chuck Berry classics. On the surface Elles was a confident child who threw herself into drama, musical theatre and sports.

But things changed for her career when she was hospitalised with viral and bacterial pneumonia, leaving her with the husky voice she's retained ever since. "Yeah it sounded like I was smoking sixty a day, drinking whiskey…" she grins.

You could say her fate was set. When the aforementioned indie band came to an end, she went to university before deciding to make a go of it as a soloist. With her third album, last year's *Shining In The Half-Light*, she embraced a mix of loose-limbed party tunes, heartbreak and catharsis. She agrees that she feels things very keenly. The pandemic. Having a child. The recent earthquake in Turkey and Syria. Fuel for the emotive storytelling in her music; something she shares with the likes of Beth Hart and Bonnie Raitt. "It's quite an exhausting trait to have because you just take on everything. I'm sure that often reflects in my music.

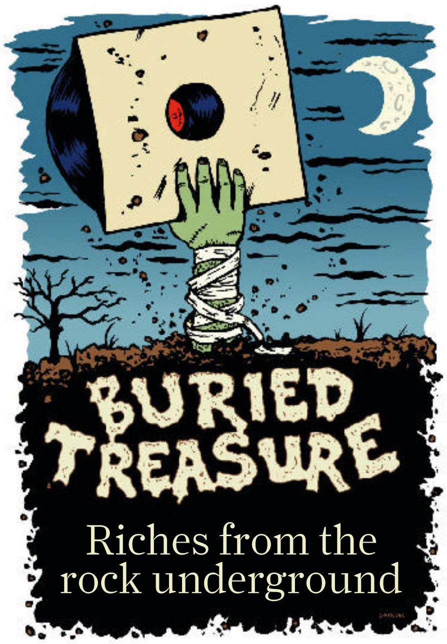
"The careers of people like Imelda May are a huge inspiration to me," she adds. "I've never really been interested in fame or anything like that. I just want to make good music that can help people – in the same way that people like Bonnie Raitt, and Beth Hart and Imelda May have these incredible careers that just continue. That's my hope." **PG**

For tour dates and more visit ellesbailey.com

FOR FANS OF...

"Bonnie Raitt has been a huge inspiration to me, and people like Beth Hart as well. But Imelda May's *Life Love Flesh Blood* - the deluxe edition - is possibly one of my favourite albums ever. She'd been doing the rockabilly thing for so long, and then she comes out with this album, which is just so incredible, but mainstream as well."

ROB BLACKHAM/PRESS



THE HUMAN INSTINCT

Pins In It, Pye Records, New Zealand, 1971. £400.

The Human Instinct came from the New Zealand coastal city of Tauranga. Initially known as Four Fours, they released a string of relatively successful singles in their home country.

Hungry for a break overseas, they headed to the UK in the summer of 1966, providing the entertainment on the passenger ship that took them there, and during the journey they decided a name change was necessary and became The Human Instinct.

After months of relentless attempts to get recognised in London, the band signed to Mercury, but a couple of decent singles failed to make an impact. They were then picked up by Deram, who released the excellent, freakbeat-sounding single *A Day In My Mind's Mind* and one other. They got plenty of gigs, including notable guest spots with Small Faces, the Jeff Beck Group, Hendrix and more. But still not getting the hits they needed, they became disillusioned.

'An otherworldly touch continues throughout the album.'

Back in NZ, with some line-up changes, they released three excellent albums between 1969/71, the strongest arguably being the third, *Pins In It*, which features class lysergic playing from cult guitarist Billy T.K. On opener *Pinzinet* the band throw in a psychedelic passage during the mid-section, adding an otherworldly touch that continues throughout the course of the album, making it more interesting than a standard rock album. *Duchess Of Montrose* is killer psych-blues, *The Washing Song* is a Hendrixian mover. They even cover Pink Floyd's heaviest track, *The Nile Song*, giving it a spaced-out treatment.

Billy T.K. quit the band after *Pins In It*, and The Human Instinct continued, albeit in an more commercial vein. **LD**

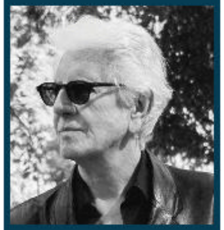
NEWS

Paul McCartney has played bass on a track on a forthcoming album by **The Rolling Stones**, although reports that Ringo Starr would also appear on the band's first record of new material in 18 years have been denied.

Kiss have confirmed that their last ever gigs will take place in their home town, New York City, at Madison Square Garden on December 1 and 2.

According to Nikki Sixx, **Mötley Crüe** could continue touring until 2031, when they celebrate their fiftieth anniversary. "Me and Tommy [Lee] and Vince [Neil] had this conversation," says the bassist: "'What are you guys doing for the next eight years?'"

Richie Sambora is discussing a return to **Bon Jovi**. The guitarist, who left the group a decade ago, told Absolute Radio: "We're talking about it. I don't think there's any reason not to at this point."



Graham Nash (pictured) releases *Now*, his first album in seven years, on May 19 via BMG. Nash says the 13-song set is "the most personal album I have ever made".

Funk-rockers **Extreme** release a new album, *Six*, on June 9 via earMUSIC. The follow-up to 2008's *Saudades de Rock* is preceded by the single *Rise*.

Brian May has been talking to the team behind **Queen**'s Oscar-winning 2018 bio-pic *Bohemian Rhapsody*, and says the idea of making a sequel is "so tempting".

WELCOME BACK

dEUS

The Belgian art-rockers will be hoping first album in 10 years is music to the ears of some of their famous fans.

Since emerging in the mid-90s, Belgian rockers dEUS have embarked on a career of sonic shape shifting, somehow never repeating what went before while always sounding like themselves. Along the way the quintet's music has taken in muscular riffing, delicate balladry, jazz-tinged experimentation, orchestral epics and barbed grooves, and it all melds together perfectly on new album *How To Replace It*. It's an adventurous, panoramic rock record that shows dEUS to be in fine creative fettle. Frontman and band leader Tom Barman talked to us about its creation.

"We'd played live a lot and I think we started [the album] at the right time."

***How To Replace It* is the band's first record in ten years. What was the spark for getting back in the saddle?**

Well, it was never an intention not to make it. We'd played live a lot and I think we started at the right time, because we were pumped up from doing [1999 album] *The Ideal Crash* twentieth-anniversary tour. We did seventy shows, so the band was well-oiled, and that was the starting point back in 2018-19. The only big change was that I wanted to go back to the MO from the 1990s and from the 2000s, which is that I bring more stuff to the table. And then that we keep the jams short and intense.

What did you learn from revisiting *The Ideal Crash* that you brought into the new record?

The quality of songs. It wasn't a nostalgia trip as much for me as it was for the fans, which I have no problem with. I enjoyed it, but we didn't start *How To Replace It* with a nostalgia feel, it was more like: "Okay, those songs were all good, let's try and do the same." It's all very under the skin, it's not outspoken or conceptual.

When you meet someone who hasn't heard dEUS's music and they ask you what your band sounds like, what do you say to them?

If they really want to know, I say "art-rock". But usually they don't know what art-rock is, so I have to explain it! After thirty years, dEUS still lacks the ideal dinner-party answer, like: "Oh, we've won a Grammy", just to finish the fucking embarrassing conversation. We were used in *The Sopranos*, and that does the job a little bit but, I think dEUS deserves one or two more so I can get that conversation out of the way. "dEUS? Never heard of them." "Well, we just worked with Dr Dre." Something like that. I just tell them to listen to the last record.

Who's the most famous dEUS fan?

I think that's gonna sound braggy. **I asked.**

We've got plenty, but there's very unpredictable ones, like the late Robert Palmer, which I thought was amazing. I was a huge fan. He was one of the biggest, most underrated singers. So Robert Palmer, the whole of R.E.M. always kept on coming, Muse keeps on talking about us, which is nice, and I know U2 have *The Ideal Crash* in their studio.

Which track on the new record best sums up dEUS in 2023?

I like *Le Blues Polaire*, the French one. I like it because it's in three acts. The band had already forgotten that they jammed it, and I turned it into a seven-minute epic and they didn't react really positively to it because of the French bits, going: "Oh, it's very sixties. Do we want to do this?" But now they all love it. I would say that sums us up in this moment. **ND**

How To Replace It is available now via [PIAS] Recordings.

"One thing we've learned in the past few years is that if people don't get it, keep grinding on."

★ HIGH HOPES

Doomsday Outlaw

From rough metal to a refined melodic blues rock, England's north will rise again.

2020 WAS A difficult year for Doomsday Outlaw. First guitarist and founding member Steve Broughton decided to leave the Sheffield-based band, whose gutsy, melodic blues rock falls somewhere between The Answer and Rival Sons. Then a few weeks later, Covid pulled the plug on their first European tour.

"We were on our way to Barcelona," explains bassist Indy Chanda, "and by 10 o'clock that night they'd declared a state of emergency. So we had to drive home. It was gut wrenching." The band wouldn't play for another eighteen months. "It was a rough period," says vocalist Phil Poole. "We'd got ourselves up to a point where we had all this momentum and we just had to start again."

But this lot are nothing if not resilient; durable even. It's been a decade now since the band formed in Derby. Since then there have been numerous line up changes, a relocation to Yorkshire and much musical re-adjustment: "The band is now is very different to what it was when I joined," says Indy. "The previous vocalist to Phil was a different proposition, very growly."

Back then they were paddling in the shallow end of metal – hence the apocalyptic-sounding moniker. "We thought briefly about changing the name. But then we realised it didn't really matter. Look at a band like Extreme, if you didn't know anything about them you'd never think they sound like they do."

Both Indy and Phil agree that their current/third album *Damaged Goods* is their best yet. It's varied too; touching on Soundgarden-like heaviness (*You Make It Easy*), Southern boogie (*Walking The Line*), even a Faces-style rave up on *Turn Me Loose*. Holding it together is Alez D'Elia's superb guitar work and Poole's soulful vocals.

Poole is the main lyricist and much of the material is generated from his own life experience. "I'm very happy now, but there's something to be said for a bit of misery," the singer suggests, before admitting, "I've had my demons in life."

This is best exemplified on recent single *One More Sip*, a look at the singer's own struggles with alcohol. "It was originally called *Drink Myself To Death* but that felt a bit too much! It was written about a dark time in my life but it's probably the happiest sounding song on the album and I like doing that. I suppose I kind of like making fun of my misery a bit…"

But instead of an early grave, Phil is gearing up for a far happier life event – becoming a dad for the first time. Once the wee nipper is safely delivered, expect to see Doomsday Outlaw back on the road promoting the album, nose to the grindstone.

"One thing we have learned in the past few years is if people don't get it, keep grinding on," he insists. "Things will never fall into your lap so you just have to keep going." **WS**

Damaged Goods is out now via Republic Of Music

FOR FANS OF...

Ozzy's *No More Tears* struck a chord with the band, especially Phil: "It's got big ballads but it's also got stuff like *Zombie Stomp* that's heavy and riffy. It's also got quite Sabbath-y moments and there's always something going on melodically. You've even got bits of country, which was quite unusual for rock music at that point."

CHRIS SAUNDERS/PRESS

Richard Marx

Hazard

He only recorded it to prove people wrong and he considered it his worst ever song. So just how did the AOR singer's global smash hit come about?

Words: **Dave Ling**

More than a decade ago, as a precursor to performing the song concerned live, Richard Marx astonished a sold-out audience at his London's Royal Albert Hall show by describing the 1992 worldwide chart-topper *Hazard* as "the dumbest, lamest thing" that he'd ever written. He then went on to add: "The only reason I recorded it was to prove that my now ex-wife – who along with many of my friends believed it would be a smash – was wrong."

The motto of this tale is simple: if in doubt, *always* listen to your wife. The song *Hazard* went on to become a career-defining moment for the Chicago-born singer-songwriter.

"Yeah, that's absolutely right. *Hazard* is up there with *Right Here Waiting* [a squelchy ballad from his second album, *Repeat Offender*, released in 1989] as my biggest global hit," Marx agrees now, sounding slightly sheepish.

Unsurprisingly, 31 years after *Hazard* helped to propel its parent album *Rush Street* towards more than two million sales, Marx has revised his opinion of the song.

"I love *Hazard*, I still love singing it and I never play a concert without including it," he smiles about the fan favourite. "Even after all this time, I still get a lot enjoyment from how fascinated people are with the mystique behind its story."

It was the working out of the plotline – when a woman called Mary vanishes without trace, the finger is pointed at a local social pariah who protests his innocence despite harbouring feelings for her – that gave Marx his biggest headache. Quite literally, the rest of *Hazard* was handed to him on a silver platter.

"Dude, I dreamed that song!" he exclaims. "It was the first time that it had happened to me. I was on the tour for *Repeat Offender* and I fell asleep in the back of the bus somewhere between Illinois and Indiana and when I woke up at around 4am, I could hear the entire record in my head. The whole piece of music that provided me with the orchestration came to me overnight – what the bass part was, where the drums would go, what the guitar was doing, even the sound of the synthesizer pad… everything, except the actual lyrics.

"So I sang [the music] into my trusty Panasonic cassette recorder – hey it was 1990!" he chuckles – "and then I lived with it whilst deciding what the song should be about. The possibilities were endless because it was haunting and dramatic. The challenge was to write a story to match the music."

Marx spent "weeks and weeks" tinkering with the song's narrative, which follows a central character in love with Mary, who in turn goes out walking alone and never returns home. Following a visit from '*a man with a badge*' and with a thousand pointing fingers, the narrator further stirs the pot by suggesting some kind of prejudice against him since he arrived in the town, aged seven.

"I swear, man, there was a point when I started to get really excited about it, but the more time I spent on the song I realised it was laughably stupid. I almost didn't record it. It sounded like a really stupid episode of *Twin Peaks*. When you think about it, *Hazard* is buried as maybe track eight on the *Rush Street* record [in fact, it's track five – Sequencing Ed], but when I was persuaded to put it on there I felt it would just be an album track. I didn't think anybody would care about it, but somebody at the label liked it and the next thing I knew, it was huge."

> **"I almost didn't record it. It sounded like a really stupid episode of *Twin Peaks*."**

Apart from its brooding, stripped-down feel, the song's real charm is its almost palpable sense of the sinister.

"I wrote it as a murder-mystery, and the conclusion is unsolved," Marx explains. "I never wanted to reveal the culprit's identity. Apart from it being set in Nebraska, the only thing I didn't know was the town's name…

"This was in pre-internet days so I called the Nebraska Chamber Of Commerce and asked a very nice-sounding woman to fax me a list of every town in the state. My fax machine started spitting out page after page. I shuffled them and took pot luck; it felt like picking a band name," he laughs. "The first one I found was Ogallala, which clearly wouldn't work because it had too many syllables, so I tried again. And that time it was Hazard, which I knew felt absolutely right."

Released as the second single from *Rush Street*, *Hazard* peaked at No.9 on America's *Billboard* Hot 100, topping the chart in Australia and going Top Three in Canada, the UK and Ireland. In New Zealand, Norway and Sweden it was also a Top 10 hit. Not too shabby for a tune its composer had initially written off as a lame duck.

Filmed in black and white to enhance its drama, the song was accompanied by a clever promotional video that has now been viewed almost 30 million times. It offers four theories to explain Mary's death: that she either took her own life or was killed by the song's central character, or alternatively, by the town's sheriff, or even by an unnamed alternative lover. It concludes with Marx walking dejectedly back to his burnt-out trailer park home.

In spite of its immense popularity, to the best of Richard Marx's knowledge, no other artist is yet to record a cover version of *Hazard*. "I am dying to hear what a country artist could do with it," he proposes. "I think that would be great."

Hazard went on to become a bit of a housewives' favourite, perhaps suggesting that Marx was just a croonsome balladeer and nothing else. When asked whether the song gave a false impression of his composing and performing skills, Richard bursts out laughing.

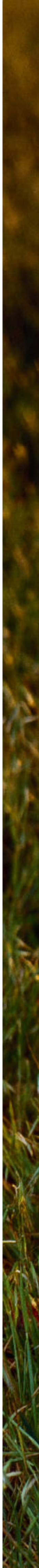
"Are you kidding? Maybe others of mine did, but not that one. My personal experience is that *Hazard* is enjoyed way more by dudes than by women. At my shows, every night someone in the crowd will yell out that title and I can tell you, it's never, ever a woman!"

RICHARD MARX: "I DIDN'T MURDER MARY!"

Because Marx featured so centrally in its video, doing an accomplished job of inserting the listener into the drama of his '*small Nebraska town*', that to this day he still encounters fans who presume *Hazard* to be autobiographical.

"There are people who really think I actually murdered a girl and ended up writing a song about it, I swear that to be true," he says. "When they say that, I just stare at them."

RICHARDMARXVEVO/UMG (ON BEHALF OF VIRGIN RECORDS LTD)



DEBORAH FEINGOLD/CORBIS VIA GETTY IMAGES

Richard Marx: murder-mystery song composer.

THE FACTS

RELEASE DATE
January 28, 1992

HIGHEST CHART POSITION
UK No.3,
US No.9

PERSONNEL
Richard Marx
Lead and backing vocals
Michael Egizi
Keyboards, programming
Bruce Gaitsch
Acoustic guitar
Chris Trujillo
Percussion

WRITTEN BY
Richard Marx

PRODUCED BY
Richard Marx

LABEL
Capitol

Q&A

Joey Tempest

Celebrating their 40th anniversary with a tour, documentary, and new music, Europe's singer reflects on the band and that song.

Words: **Dave Ling**

To anyone outside of Sweden, Europe appeared to burst out of nowhere when they topped the charts of 25 different countries with their single *The Final Countdown* in 1986. However, with seven years of groundwork laid (they were initially known as Force) and two albums to their name, this was no bunch of overnight sensations. Eight albums and a ten-year hiatus later, Europe are about to celebrate their 40th anniversary.

These 40th anniversary shows are being billed as 'The Time Capsule'. What does that mean?
It's still pretty early to talk about all of that, but we will be including quite a few cuts that we usually don't play. It will be a more varied show than usual, and longer – with an interval. These venues, like the Palladium in London are 'nicer', but we are still deciding upon the type of production we will use.

As a resident of London, after the two Palladium shows, you can take the Tube home.
[Laughing] That way there will be no worries about traffic. Yeah, I love that venue. I did a Led Zeppelin tribute show there not too long ago. In Stockholm we are doing three nights at the Circus [capacity 1,650] which all sold out very quickly, those are the perfect places for a show like this.

Back in the mid-eighties when the readers of *Smash Hits* argued over which band was the cutest – Europe or Bon Jovi – what were you secretly thinking?
It was quite a surprise for these suburban kids from Stockholm. We had done two albums, but then the promotion for *The Final Countdown* kicked in and suddenly the teeny magazines were all over us. My initial thing was that I wanted to look like Robert Plant, but [the big hair] became something. We were being pitted in rivalries with these other bands, which was not the case. Right from the start we had wanted to be a touring rock band like Deep Purple, and suddenly these stupid questions [from pop magazines] were coming left, right and centre. We hadn't expected that. It was kind of a drag for a while but we're Swedes, we work hard and don't complain.

Do you ever wonder how different life might have been for Europe without *The Final Countdown*?
Sometimes I do, yeah. With *Wings Of Tomorrow* [the second album, released as a four-piece in 1984] we knew we were going places but we could never have dreamt what that song gave us. As international rock bands, Def Leppard and Iron Maiden had opened a lot of doors and for a short period we were the biggest band in the world. Suddenly we were playing festivals with Duran Duran and it was like: 'Okay, we're here for a while, are we?' We became a 'crossover band'; I don't know whether that's good or bad.

Since its release have you ever done an interview when *The Final Countdown* wasn't mentioned?
I don't think so. Even a specialised interview about another song would reference it to *The Final Countdown*. That's an interesting fact, now you mention it.

What goes through your mind when you sing that song for the ten millionth time?
At that point in the set we don't really think about how many times we have played it. It's an 'in the moment' song because it brings everybody together.

For 'people watchers' it's a heaven-sent opportunity because it can be a bucket list moment.
That's true. My family are sometimes on the stage and they always like to watch the audience. When we play heavier festivals like Bloodstock or Hellfest, it unites people from all kinds of genres, which is amazing.

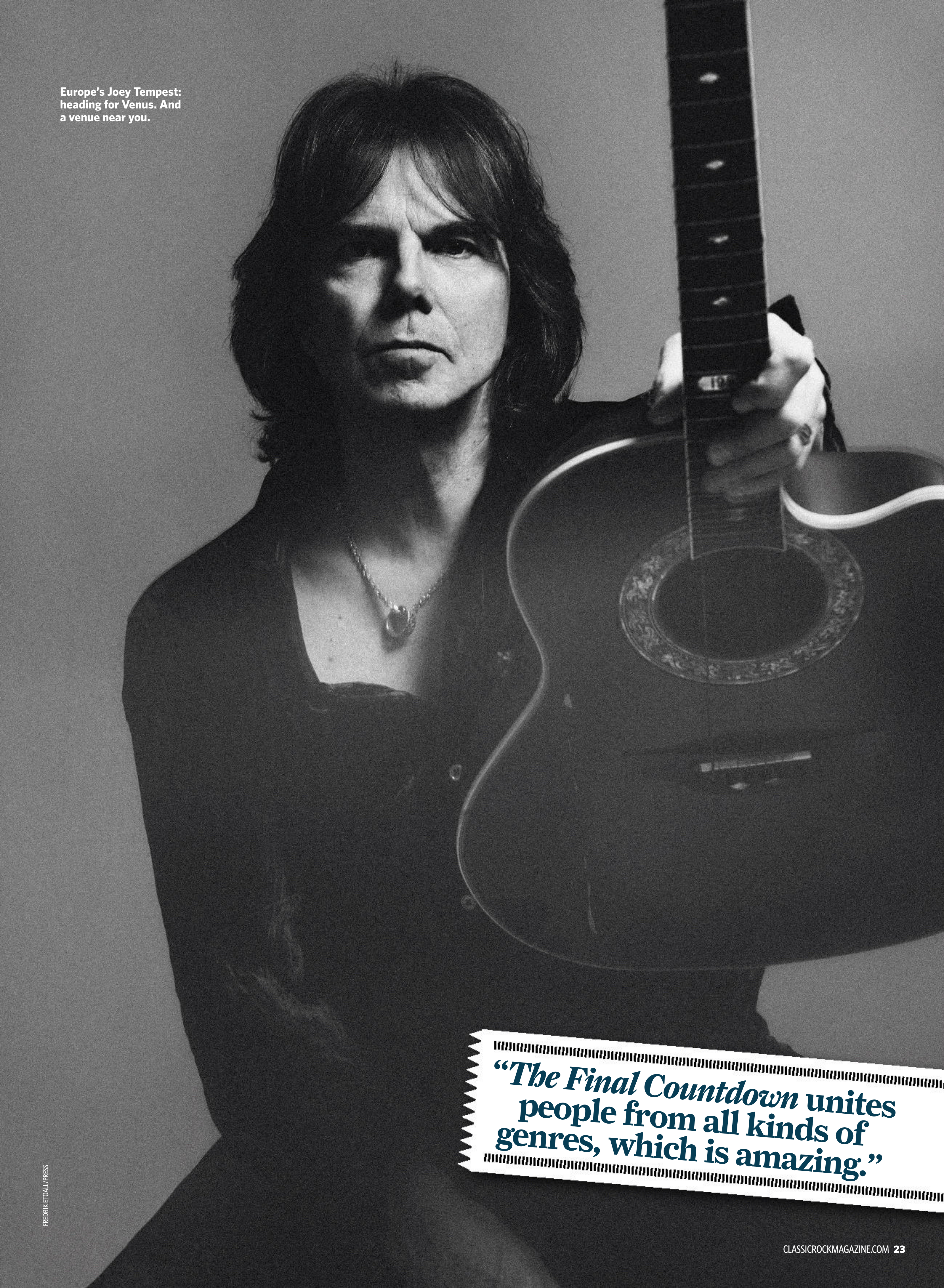
Is new Europe music on the way?
Some writing has been going on and we're at the stage where we are listening to what we have. It seems as though there's more than we need. Some of them are amazing. I would like to release a couple of songs before the anniversary tour, though I'm not going to promise that will happen – because we want them to be special – but we will *try* to make it happen.

Could the band go back to playing in the more melodic style of *The Final Countdown*?
You know what? Had we been having this conversation ten years ago that would have been completely impossible but we have reached a point where it's no longer the case, and the great thing is that it happened in a completely natural way. I'm realising that my writing has returned to its roots, the melodic elements connected to that era have returned. I find that quite exciting because it wasn't premeditated. Had I suggested 'doing an eighties album' then John [Norum, guitar], John [John Levén, bass], Mic [Michaeli, keys] and Ian [Haugland, drums] would have shot me. But it turns out they are also thinking: 'This could be pretty cool', so we will see where it goes.

How else are Europe planning to celebrate this anniversary?
It's something that's been in the pipeline for quite a while, but at last we are doing a documentary. The interviews with the band are shot, we're going through old VHS tapes and there's a list of people we want to be involved [as 'talking heads']. I'm so pleased. It will tell the definitive story of Europe. The idea is to have it ready for September or October. Just before the tour, that's the plan anyway.

What piece of advice would the fifty-nine-year-old Joey offer to the wide-eyed twenty-year-old preparing to release Europe's debut album?
I'd tell him to just relax a little bit, also maybe to drop the key on a few songs. Why did we record them so high? You've got to sing them for the next forty years.

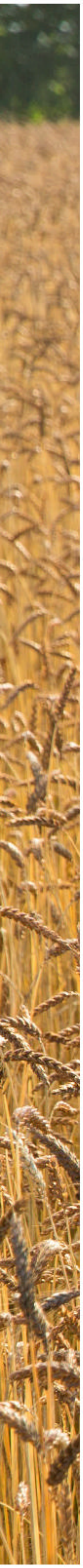
Europe's UK tour begins in Cardiff on October 17.

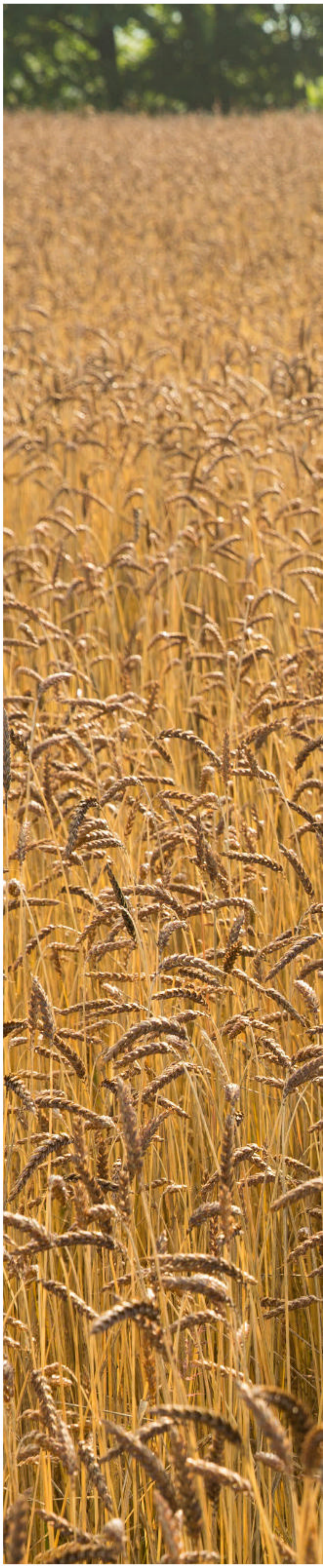


Europe's Joey Tempest: heading for Venus. And a venue near you.

FREDRIK ETOALL/PRESS

“*The Final Countdown* unites people from all kinds of genres, which is amazing.”





6 THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT…

Inspector Cluzo

Environmentally-friendly French farming is a proving ground we didn't predict, but blues rock has always been rooted (geddit?) in the country.

Words: **Emma Johnston**

There are free-roaming geese honking in the background when vocalist/guitarist Laurent and drummer Mathieu of blues rockers Inspector Cluzo call from the farm they run in rural Gascony, France. Somewhere in the background, Miguel, their favourite goat (and mascot for their record label) is munching his way through the hedgerows. Just back from the local farmer's market where they've been selling their avian companions' eggs, it's pretty clear that this is neither your average band. Nor your average farm.

"Our farming is renewable and noble, especially now with the climate changing," says Laurent. "It's more important than playing rock'n'roll because we're on the frontline of agro-ecology. So, it's a good balance with the band, but it's constant work." As they release their ninth album, *Horizons*, here are the things to know about the bucolic bluesmen…

They take a rock'n'roll approach to farming

Both men studied physics at university and combined their knowledge with their grandparents' way of farming on their 15-hectare plot where they grow organic wheat and corn. As the title of one track on the new album points out, *Running A Family Farm Is More Rock Than Playing Rock'N'Roll*. "This is working," says Laurent of their methods. "Our goal is to feed people with no more chemicals, no GMOs. We need animals to fertilise the soil, so we need to save them. There's a lot of greenwashing out there."

They take a farming approach to rock'n'roll

Fiercely independent and more interested in tending their land than hanging out at Parisian parties, the band hold no truck with the music industry and stay as far away as possible. "The French music industry is embarrassing. We will keep doing the label ourselves, we will keep on being 100% independent. We wanted to show that we could be self-sufficient, but also create our own richness where we are, because we think it's more modern to show that it's possible outside of them. John Lennon used to say that French rock is like English wine. So, we have to be very far away from Paris because they don't understand anything about rock'n'roll. Everything is really mainstream in French music."

Iggy Pop is on board

One way to get the attention of a punk legend is to write about his dick in a song about the death of rock'n'roll. That's exactly what they did on *Rockophobia*, referencing the great man's one-time penchant for flashing Little Iggy to his audiences. A mutual acquaintance made sure it reached his radar, and he ended up offering to add vocals to the track, which seem buried deep in the mix.

"He sent us a message, we arranged it, stuck it on, and that's all," says Laurent. "That's exactly what rock'n'roll should be – simple. He doesn't take himself too seriously still, and I think it's part of being a good rock'n'roll guy."

They found kindred spirits in Clutch

Having toured with the masters of groove-laden blues rock in the US, Inspector Cluzo found an instant fanbase in their audience, and an instant friendship with the band. Neil Fallon has even been to stay on the farm with his family. "The Clutch audiences for us were perfect," says Mathieu. "They are really music lovers, as well as Clutch are. We were on the same page. In the US we did a tour with them in the Midwest and we had a lot of new fans every night."

"We don't like the music industry, but with these guys it's different. It's real, they're friends," adds Laurent.

They have a global outlook

Having played everywhere from China to South America, Japan to Scotland, India to Madagascar, the band see themselves as worldwide citizens, something illustrated in the video to *Horizons*, which features images of native people from around the globe.

"It's all the travel, we've played in 67 countries," says Laurent. "We met so many different cultures. So, with the *Horizons* video, I was thinking, 'we'll do all the native stuff because we met so many people'. The South American culture too – in Gascon we have a lot of ancestors there, in Argentina, Uruguay, in Patagonia. It's really important for us."

They fight for their feathered friends

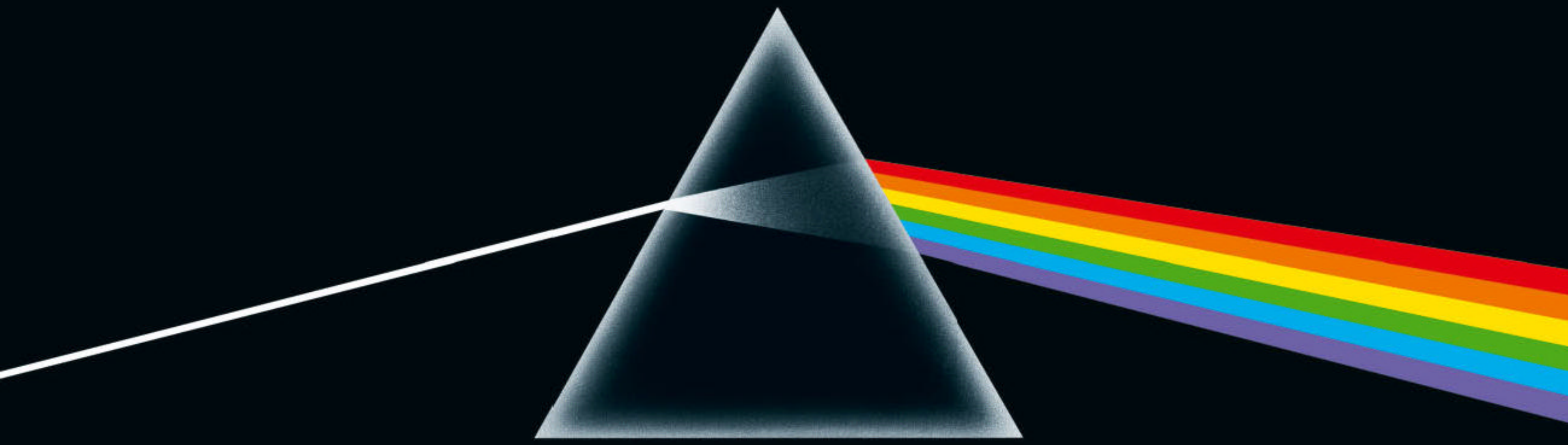
The song *Wolf At The Door* was inspired by their battle against factory farms opening nearby – risking the spread of avian flu. When a local establishment succumbed to the disease, Laurent and Mathieu resisted government calls to have their own healthy, free-range birds killed. It's covered in the song *Saving The Geese*.

"It was polite resistance," says Laurent. "They sent a famous professor from the University of Toulouse to analyse our system. He confirmed that the geese were not sick. They're outside. That is what you need to raise animals: outside freedom. We got some threats from the big industry here. But we're well supported by the neighbours – the older people that believe in our system. It's the fight of our life and it will keep on going."

Horizons is out now via F.thebassplayer Records

Spring watch: Inspector Cluzo shaking the wheat.

PINK FLOYD
THE DARK SIDE OF THE MOON



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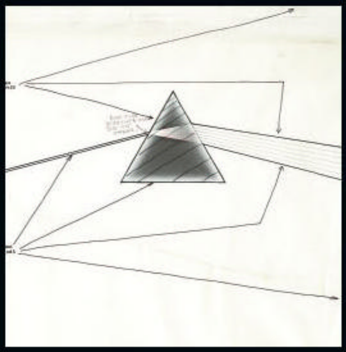

PINK FLOYD

50

THE DARK SIDE
OF THE MOON

MEN FOR ALL SEASONS

Stranger things: in their 40-plus years **Metallica** have gone from being a cult metal band to a commercial juggernaut and a household name. But even with new album *72 Seasons* ready to storm charts worldwide they're still angry, still insecure.

Words: **Paul Rees** Photos: **Tim Saccenti**

A blue-skied mid-morning in Lisbon. It's Carnival Tuesday, February 21, in the Portuguese capital and a national holiday across the country. A marching band are already striking up an imploring samba rhythm from the grand riverfront plaza, the Praca do Comercio. Lines of Mardi Gras revellers in brightly coloured costumes snake along the length of the Rua Serpa Pinto. This vaulting thoroughfare spears off the from the plaza and up the steep hill leading to the skeletal remains of the Convento do Carmo, its Gothic pillars and arches looming over the city like the carcass of a great, gutted whale.

There's a crowd gathered at the head of the road, in the shadow of the ruined convent. In their midst a solitary musician, a busker, is picking out a weeping melody on a battered acoustic guitar. The song is better suited to the dead of a long, dark night than a street party, and at once familiar as being *Nothing Else Matters*. Such is Metallica's enduring ubiquity in this, their forty-second year. Their sheer staying power is remarkable. It's approaching 32 years since *Nothing Else Matters*'s parent record, *Metallica*, aka the Black album, roared out. More than six since Metallica last released an album of new music.

"We were four super-angry, insecure, frustrated kids. Nothing's really changed in terms of our emotional makeup."

Kirk Hammett

Not that the band have ever truly gone away. Last summer they played shows – festival headliners and their own stadium dates – in a handful of European cities, including Lisbon. These were trailblazers for November's clarion-call single *Lux Aeterna*. Two more new songs – *Screaming Suicide* and *If Darkness Had A Son* – have followed already this year. They are precursors to the release this month of *72 Seasons*, the first Metallica studio album since *Hardwired… To Self-Destruct* back in 2016. What's more,

this rush of activity has chimed with the band attaining a level of hipness without precedent in all the rest of their 125-million-records-sold-and-counting time together.

Put another way, Metallica are riding the wave of the *Stranger Things* effect. More accurately, the grandstanding moment in season four's finale episode when Hellfire Club metalhead Eddie Munson cranked out *Master Of Puppets* from the roof of his trailer in the Upside Down. It was, in fact, Metallica bassist Robert Trujillo's 18-year-old son, Tye, playing the re-recorded riff (the young Trujillo's third-grade teacher happens to be married to one of the show's producers). Tye Trujillo recorded his part at a tiny studio in Venice Beach, unbeknown at the time to James Hetfield, Lars Ulrich and Kirk Hammett. Since the *Stranger Things* episode aired last July, the original Metallica track has had more than half a billion streams on Spotify. The band were also the subject of a weighty profile piece in august, scholarly American magazine *The New Yorker* (among its other recent, and more typical, profile subjects are Salman Rushdie, American-Iranian conceptual artist Tala Madani, and Swiss explorer Bertrand Piccard).

On another mid-February morning, Lars Ulrich, Kirk Hammett and Rob Trujillo are at their homes in, respectively, San Francisco, Honolulu, and Topanga Canyon – a hop to the west of Los Angeles. It's seasonably mild in California and, reports Hammett, raining sideways in Hawaii. Each of them, Ulrich especially, is in relaxed but expansive mood. As well they might be. The three new songs have been met with an overwhelmingly positive response from the Metallica faithful. Their combined crackle of electric energy and urgent intent ramped up by the videos accompanying them – slickly stylised, attention-grabbing clips, the work of New York-based photographer/filmmaker Tim Saccenti, who also counts Depeche Mode and Coldplay as clients. Everything in Metallica world just now has the look of being in ship-shape working order, a well-oiled machine.

In the past few weeks, Ulrich has set himself to taking stock of *72 Seasons* as a whole, complete piece. He's been listening to it most often while looking out of the window of a moving car, and also whenever he's working out at home. He likes the songs, he says, adding the caveat: "I haven't quite figured anything more out, to be honest.

"I'm preparing myself for the barrage of different opinions," he continues. "And no opinion is not worthy! When you haven't shared any new music for six years, it's nice just to press the button and get it out of the house, so to speak. It's an exciting time."

In the manner of its beginning, at least, *72 Seasons* took shape like no other Metallica record. By Ulrich's estimate, the band officially started work on it during the late summer of 2020, and when still in the teeth of the covid pandemic. Self-isolating at home, they communicated with each other via Zoom meetings.

Up to then, Ulrich says he'd passed the various lockdown periods "hobbling along trying to figure out whether I should binge-watch forty episodes of *The Crown* this week". Hammett "played guitar and increased my meditation time considerably. What else was I going to do? Oh yeah, and I made a solo record (last year's *Portals* EP). I forgot that part." Trujillo taught himself to cook (speciality dish: Mexican enchiladas with a secret sauce). In general, Ulrich considers, the experience was "a complete mind-fuck".

The band's actual nuts-and-bolts processes survived the ordeal intact. Their starting point was their usual one: Ulrich sifting through the piles of accumulated recordings made variously at rehearsal-room jam sessions and sound-checks, in hotel rooms and during backstage warm-ups over the years intervening *Hardwired*…, and extracting the bare bones of ideas for the band to develop going forward; a snatch of a riff of here, the hint of a counter-melody there. It was all scrutinised through the lens of the drummer's own five-star rating system: anything deemed four or above worthy of greater attention, the twos and ones consigned to history.

"In Metallica, it's not as if somebody ever picks up an acoustic guitar on a couch and – bam! – there's a song," says Ulrich. "It's many pieces of puzzles and connecting the bits. Then we started

listening to and jamming through the stuff we'd picked out and on our Zoom sessions, sat behind computer screens in our home studios or makeshift music rooms.

"Dealing with how you make music when everything has a two-second delay. I would be playing a drum beat and James putting a riff over it. He could hear my drums, but I couldn't hear his guitar. Or

"We're stubborn, and we don't want to let the music, or the legacy, down."

Kirk Hammett

vice-versa. It wasn't conducive to maintaining your sanity. We were sort of stumbling ahead and with all the uncertainties of calendars, lockdowns and the human condition. For a few months there we moved forward very, very slowly. Progress was glacial."

When eventually they were able to convene again at the band's home base, HQ – their sprawling studio-come-rehearsal facility in San Rafael, a 30-minute drive from San Francisco, where every Metallica album since the ill-fated *St. Anger* has gone down – it was in the 'new normal' state of things. Which is to say with everyone having to take covid tests every morning and maintain a safe distance from each other in the studio.

Joining them at HQ was Greg Fidelman, a team fixture ever since he'd been Rick Rubin's right-hand man on 2008's *Death Magnetic* album, and having then stepped up to helm *Hardwired*… The sessions were interrupted once more with the band breaking off to honour touring commitments in North and South America and Europe, held over from the pandemic, but otherwise, say the principals, proceeded relatively hitch-free. 'Civilised' is the word Ulrich chooses to describe the pervading atmosphere.

"The difference these days is we're maybe more respectful of each other," he says. "We listen more to each other. There's less of the 'Fuck you', and more of 'That sounds interesting, let's try it your way.'"

"When we were working by Zoom, a lot of that weird energy and chemistry was dissipated," says Hammett. "It was there still, but not as strong. So many of the great things that happen with us as a band are the result of the four us being together in the room. Coming up with ideas is not really a challenge. Between the four of us we have so many fucking great ideas."

Still, from outset to finish, *72 Seasons* gobbled up two years. Debut album *Kill 'Em All* was done and dusted in not much more than a couple of weeks of May '83.

"As you get older, the good thing is you have more experience, and the bad is it affords you more options," says Ulrich. "The more options, the longer things ▷

Men for all *Seasons*: Lars Ulrich (left) and Kirk Hammett.

'New boy' Robert Trujillo: Metallica's bassist since 2003.

take because you feel this inherent need to go over every one of them. You can spend a day trying to weed nine options down to one or two. And of course there's a part of you romanticising how when you were twenty-two you did it instinctively, without having to fucking think about it."

Ulrich and Hetfield both turn 60 this year. Hammett reached that milestone in November last year. Together, and separately, and ever since the Black album rampaged its way into the global consciousness, the three of them have serially appeared to be grappling with the question of exactly what Metallica should be. And also how best – and if at all – they should go on being Metallica. With Jason Newsted on bass through the *Load/Reload* era of haircuts, eyeliner, arty videos and album covers made up of blood and semen. Then with Newsted's successor Trujillo, a sprightly 59 this October, on board from *St. Anger* onwards.

Trujillo recalls his initiation into the band as "a wild ride – a roller-coaster". Small wonder, given that he arrived in the wake of Hetfield's well-documented disappearance to rehab and the ensuing turmoil when hapless 'life counsellor' Phil Towle was engaged to try to fix their fracturing intra-band relationships. The whole mess of it was preserved for posterity in 2004's infamous *Some Kind Of Monster*, an act of shared self-flagellation masquerading as a making-of documentary film.

Coming after *St. Anger*, *Death Magnetic* – all too accurately reappraised in *The New Yorker* as "a record with all the defeated energy of a sinking stone" – couldn't help but constitute a rebirth of sorts, and despite the fact that its songs sounded so wrenched out. *Hardwired…* was stronger yet, a re-flexing of muscles and with a renewed sense of purpose. It's the Metallica record Ulrich is drawn back to the most – "The one with the longest shelf life for me," he says. "Or, from a different position, the one I find the fewest faults with."

72 Seasons ups the ante. Clocking in at a hefty 12 songs/77 minutes, it ranges across four sides of vinyl. It does the same chrome-plated renovation job on the core elements of the classic mid-to-late-80s Metallica sound – the chugga-chugga riffs, Ulrich's volleying drums, Hammett's wah-wah-ing solos, Hetfield's anguished howl – as its two immediate predecessors, but better. Thrilling even at its peak points, and in sum dense, complex and relentless.

On the one hand it's precision designed to super-serve the diehard Metallica fan. Equally, though, it will delight anyone lured in by the *Stranger Things* turn. Although, just as much as *Master Of Puppets*, it echoes its much less cherished follow-up, *…And Justice For All*, albeit with Trujillo's bass being audible. *72 Seasons*, too, is a record made up of great parts. The opening, Stuka-bomb-run screech of *Lux Aeterna*, for example. Or the corkscrewing lurches of *Crown Of Barbed Wire*. Or the rat-a-tat breakdown of closing track *Inamortal*, an 11-plus-minute epic.

Urich takes the *…Justice…* comparison as a compliment, but insists: "We tend not to reference the past all that much when we're being creative. It's not so much part of an MO, or master plan, as I think perhaps other people perceive it to be." Hammett's appraisal of the new album is more concise. "I just love the fact it doesn't have a ballad on it," he enthuses. "No freaking ballads!"

> **"I ask myself the question, who is James to me? He can be a bit of a mystery.**
>
> **Robert Trujillo**

"The biggest objective for us is trying to be truthful to the moment," Ulrich continues. "Obviously, when you've been on a creative journey for north of forty years there are twists and turns, ups and downs. On the back of the Black album, something that resonated to such a magnitude, one of the battle cries became: 'Let's not repeat it!' Thirty years later, you've enough clarity to be able to have a conversation about whether you went too far, too much into uncharted waters.

"What happens is you're in your wheelhouse and reach a point where you feel it's too confining, so you break out. After you've gone off somewhere else for a while, it's interesting, but you end up missing your original wheelhouse. You go back to where you came from. That's the path we've been on, constantly looking for something."

He's not so quick to answer the question of what exactly has made it possible for Metallica to have endured, so indomitably, indestructibly, into their fifth decade. Atypically, he falls silent. The pregnant pause lasts for 13 seconds before he at last begins to concoct an answer.

"I guess…" Another pause, this one of four seconds. "…We love what we do, and we love each other. We love how it connects us to other people enough to persevere through all the shit that has come in the way.

"When one of us went missing, in the mental and spiritual sense, there was always enough there to pull him back into the fray. We've always gone with the option of sticking it out and finding ways to keep going over severing our ties. Severing would often have been the easier thing to do, but we've been prepared to put in the time, work and resources to keep this functioning."

"I feel like all of my best years are still going to be ahead of me, except they might not be."

Lars Ulrich

Hammett answers the same question right off the cuff: "Because we're stubborn, every single one of us, and we don't want to let the music, or the legacy, down. It's too precious and unique to give up. We might not be getting along for six months, but that's enough motivation for anyone to show up."

The new album's title is Hetfield's, and a reference to the first 18 years of a person's life. Those moulding, formative years from childhood into young adulthood. Eighteen also happens to be the age at which Hetfield and Ulrich first met. Theirs is an oft-told tale. The former responded to a small ad the latter had placed in a local Bay Area free sheet *The Recycler*: "Drummer looking for other metal musicians to jam with – Tygers of Pan Tang, Diamond Head, Iron Maiden."

They were, to be sure, an odd couple. Hetfield, raised in the Los Angeles County city of Downey by devout Christian Scientist parents. His World War II vet father, Virgil, walking out on the family when he was 13. Three years later, losing his mother, Cynthia, to cancer, and after she had refused any medical treatment on religious grounds. To Ulrich, the teenaged Hetfield seemed cripplingly shy, entirely out of step with the world around him.

On his side, Ulrich's father, Torben, a jazz critic and one-time tennis pro, had moved his only son from their native Denmark to the US when he was 15. He was enrolled as a prodigy at the storied Nick Bolletieri Tennis Academy in South Florida. Afterwards, father and son ▷

James Hetfield: "Still capable of blowing my mind with his gift," says Lars Ulrich.

Cliff 'em all: (l-r) James Hetfield, Lars Ulrich, Cliff Burton, Kirk Hammett.

168 SEASONS

Kirk Hammett provides some snapshots from Metallica's 42-year odyssey.

May 1983: Metallica relocate to a near-derelict rehearsal space in Queens, New York to make their debut album, *Kill 'Em All*.

"Snow outside the window. The glass in the window was broken, too. We were up on the fifth floor of the building. I had a piece of foam on the floor for a mattress, with my sleeping bag laid out on top of it and my leather jacket for a pillow. I was set up right next to Cliff and he was reading a dungeons and dragons book, *The Call Of Cthulhu*."

September-December 1985: recording *Master Of Puppets* at Sweet Silence studio in Copenhagen, Denmark.

"Cliff and I playing poker for matchsticks, waiting for Lars to finish the drums. Having a running commentary on anything and everything in life, laughing and drinking powerful Elephant beer pretty much twenty-four hours a day."

February 10, 1962 - September 27, 1986:
Cliff Burton, RIP

"I used to room with Cliff (right), and we were in each other's back pockets. We were brothers for three years. Before the term 'foodie' was even around, Cliff was a foodie. He was so into Mexican food, sushi, and breakfast, his favourite meal of the day. He was always talking about food. The guy ate tons of food. He'd drink copious amounts of beer as well. I don't know where it went. We used to call him Pencil Legs. Cliff loved life, and he lived it to the full. He didn't waste any of his time. If he wasn't playing music, he was finding other things to do that made him happy. He spent very little time complaining. When he left us he was just as powerful as he could be as a person. He never waned."

August 8, 1992: the notorious riot at the Olympic Stadium in Montreal during the ill-starred co-headline tour with Guns N'Roses. Metallica are forced to curtail their set when James Hetfield is burnt by pyro. Axl Rose also brings GN'R's set to a premature conclusion. Mayhem ensues.

"That whole tour was marred by controversy, and it came to a head when James had his accident. I remember being trapped in our subterranean dressing room at the stadium and our tour manager telling us it was too dangerous for us to leave. They'd turned over two cop cars and burned another vehicle outside of the venue. It felt like fucking Armageddon for a moment. It was unbelievable we'd found ourselves in the centre of that situation. Up to then we'd avoided anything like it like the plague."

January 24, 2004: the premiere of Joel Berlinger and Bruce Sinofsky's fly-on-the-wall documentary film *Some Kind Of Monster* at the Sundance festival.

"I have my own problems with *Some Kind Of Monster*. I just think it showed too much. I've made my peace with it, because I've had so many people come up to me and tell me how much it's meant to them. If it's helping people with their own problems, great, but I tend not to give it too much of my attention. I lived it, why should I fucking watch it?"

Hetfield's arm and hand were burned in a pyro accident at a show in Montreal on August 8, 1992.

Metallica with 'life counsellor' Phil Towle, who in the early 2000s was engaged to try to fix their fracturing intra-band relationships.

July 1, 2022: the fourth-season finale of *Stranger Things* airs. Eddie Munson unleashes *Master Of Puppets* on the Upside Down.

"I still haven't watched the fourth season yet! I've watched the *Master Of Puppets* sequence though. For me, it just shows you the power of the riff. Those riffs are so fucking commanding, and they have so much frigging authority. It used to be you could pick a Metallica fan out of a line-up of a hundred people: the kid with the denim or leather jacket. Jump ahead forty-plus years and I don't know who's a Metallica fan these days. I'll go on Instagram and see this nine-year-old girl from India playing a bunch of our songs on guitar. It's amazing."

Joseph Quinn as Eddie Munson in *Stranger Things*.

ROSS HALFIN x3; STRANGER THINGS: COURTESY OF NETFLIX
SOME KIND OF MONSTER: ANNAMARIA DISANTO/RADICAL MEDIA

settled in another LA satellite city, Newport Beach, by which time Lars had ditched tennis for music.

"At eighteen I was very narrow-minded, very inexperienced, but very focused on my purpose," he says. "That was to make music and to try to connect with other people who were disenfranchised, or outcasts. Hard rock fanatics like me. My outlook was very singular.

"James was the brother I never had. Starting out together, we both found solace in each other. We were so different from each other, but somehow the combination of the two of us became a whole. We filled a void in each other. The songs we were writing then, the shows we were playing, the path we were on was very constricted. Nowadays – and I talk with my two sons about this – what I see with a lot of younger people is that their path is so much wider. Their possibilities are much broader. My trajectory was very different."

Hammett, who joined in 1983 as the 20-year-old replacement for departing powder keg Dave Mustaine, adds: "As a quick insight, James is a very shy person and bashful. I'm shy and bashful. Lars is shy and not so bashful. That's the band dynamic and it all started from there. Before we were even Metallica we were four super-angry, insecure, frustrated kids who just had passion and a lot of musical energy needing to be unleashed. Nothing's really changed in terms of our emotional make-up. We're survivors as far as I'm concerned."

"When one of us went missing, in the mental and spiritual sense, there was always enough there to pull him back."

Lars Ulrich

Hetfield has declined to do interviews with the rock press for *72 Seasons*. In many ways the album does his talking for him. His lyrics for it weigh up the damages inflicted on a troubled son growing up. They navigate almost biblical degrees of torment and inner conflict, as unyielding as scripture. On the dread-filled title track, he rails of '*staring into black light, permanently midnight*'. On *Crown Of Barbed Wire* of '*this rusted empire I own*'. *Too Far Gone* finds him citing a litany of miseries: '*Crawling out my skin… I am desperation… I am isolation… I am agitation.*'

Back in September of 2019, Hetfield again checked himself into rehab, for treatment for his alcoholism. Later he stated he'd struggled with being on tour with the band and had not been "caring for myself". Last summer, and with Metallica returned to the road, he was widely reported to have filed for divorce from Francesca Tomasi, his wife of 25 years and mother to their three children. He remains a study in contrasts: the imperious, unbending frontman waging war with his demons; enigmatic, tormented and unknowable, and perhaps at times as much to his own bandmates as to anyone else.

"I ask myself the question: 'Who is James to me?'" says Trujillo. "I feel he's someone who wants to show strength and be that individual that commandeers the ship, but there's always going to be a battle with James. He can be a real, true brother and stand up for you, appreciate you. Then at other times he can get withdrawn, quiet and subdued. He can be a bit of a mystery, but in his heart I think he really strives to be better as a person and as a spiritual being."

"James is my life partner, one of my best friends," says Ulrich. "He's someone I love and respect deeply. Someone who is still capable of blowing my mind with his gift. I'm maybe more in awe of him as a creative force than I've ever been.

"He's probably the person I know best on this planet. Often when we're talking I'll know what he's going to say before he says it. If we're in a group situation, I'll know how he's going to act before he acts. At the same time, he's also enigmatic to me. He's all of it and more." ▷

Since *St. Anger*, the band have continued to manage their schedule around Hetfield's needs and principally on his terms. They've toured in shorter bursts. As with all compromises, this one appears to have its tension points.

"We're a working band, and I don't feel we play enough shows," says Hammett. "Other people in the band have other priorities, other responsibilities and other things in their lives, so we've had to come to an agreement and find a balance. If it was up to me I'd be touring six months out of every year, easily."

On the heels of *72 Seasons*, Metallica will undertake the M72 world tour. Subtitled 'No Repeat Weekend', it's 46 shows in 23 cities and other locations, with the band geared up to play completely different sets on each consecutive night. Kicking off in Amsterdam on April 27 and 28 and running through to late September in Mexico City, the itinerary takes in both Thursday and Sunday night headliner slots at the Download festival, the event having been extended to four days to accommodate Metallica's concept.

As an exercise, the tour is entirely in keeping with more recent band projects such as *The Metallica Blacklist*, the 2021 covers collection to mark the thirtieth anniversary of the Black album. That brought the disparate likes of Phoebe Bridgers, Miley Cyrus with Elton John, Dave Gahan of Depeche Mode, country superstar Chris Stapleton (all of whom took a crack at *Nothing Else Matters*), St. Vincent, Royal Blood and Jason Isbell (each rendering a version of *Sad but True*) into the Metallica tent. In the most basic sense, both it and No Repeat Weekend have the ring of ideas conjured up as means of keeping things fresh and interesting for Metallica themselves first and foremost.

"It's that same juxtaposition I talked about earlier, wanting to keep doing what's familiar but at the same time to reinvent the wheel," says Ulrich. "One of the biggest blessings of being in this band is we've carved out a way to be able to do both. In terms of our creativity, it still feels like we're only scratching the surface, as though we have licence to cover a lot more territory."

Then again, there is the matter of encroaching age and time's noose. Of one's own mortality and wanting to get things done before it's too late. What Bruce Springsteen, when he was nearing 60, once described as the growing, pressing feeling of having to run hard and fast in a bid to stay ahead of the freight train rushing up the tracks behind him.

For Metallica it's still all about their music and their legacy. Nothing else matters.

"I'm starting to see that, at least a little bit," Ulrich says, laughing. "Absolutely, with Metallica there's a sense of: 'Hurry up and get on with it,' because we may not have as much time as we once thought. Through a significant part of your life, you're going: 'I have more ahead of me than behind me.' Then you wake up one day and go: 'Holy shit, I may have more behind me!'

"There's a part of me that still feels very youthful and almost awkwardly young. Then there's the other part that feels as if I've been doing this for a hundred years. Yes I'm going to be sixty soon, but I feel like all my best years are still going to be ahead of me, except they might not be. I like being productive. My dad, who's ninety-four now, is writing every day and he has volumes of books still in his head. I know what's keeping him alive is the fact he's writing these books."

"We tend not to reference the past all that much when we're being creative."

Lars Ulrich

"For me," says Hammett, "the future doesn't even exist yet so I'm not going to spend my time here worrying about it. What is meant to be will be. Less thinking, more being in the moment. And what's next for me right now is I'm going for a thirty-minute swim."

Before Ulrich, too, heads back off into his day, he stresses that he isn't "a big regret kind of guy". He wouldn't be minded to going back in time to change, or unpick, any aspect of Metallica's long and winding road from then to now, he avows, even if he could.

"I don't spend a lot of time thinking on those kinds of things," he says. "The bus accident, of course I regret, and other dark, black things. But I'd rather try and make a better job of tomorrow than fix something from yesterday. Were some of the haircuts and wardrobe choices better than others? Yes. Did I open my big mouth and say a bunch of stupid shit? Absolutely. Hey, you do the best you can along the way, you know?"

72 Seasons is out on April 14 via Blackened Recordings. Metallica play Download on June 8 and 10.

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THE CLASSIC ROCK INTERVIEW

IAN HUNTER

He's older than rock'n'roll itself, and back with an all-star cast on his new album on Sun Records. Here he talks to *CR* about working with Jeff Beck and Taylor Hawkins, punk rock, Alex Harvey, David Bowie, and sex and drugs in the 70s. This is what he's here for.

Interview: **Scott Rowley**

"The whole thing's been a fluke," says Ian Hunter, "a lovely fluke."

Back in 2019, even Ian Hunter thought that he was finished. He had released his last solo album, *Fingers Crossed*, in 2016. That same year saw the release of *Stranded In Reality*, a 30-CD boxset of his solo material that felt like a whopping great full stop to an amazing career. UK and US tours with Mott The Hoople in 2019 seemed to take things full circle.

To mark his 80th birthday, he did five nights at The Winery in New York City, playing through his back catalogue.

"I thought that was it," he admits. But Ian Hunter underestimated himself. Def Leppard manager Mike Kobayashi came to The Winery shows and offered to manage him. So there he was: 80 years old with a new manager – a guy who manages one of the biggest rock bands in the world.

Then in 2020, Covid hit, he says: "And me and a million others went downstairs into the basement and started writing songs. Because there was nothing else to do."

Three years later, Hunter has a new record deal – with Sun Records, no less, the label that inspired him to get involved in rock'n'roll in the first place – and we have *Defiance Part 1*, ten new songs featuring a *Who's Who* of rock, including some of the last recordings from Jeff Beck and Taylor Hawkins, as well as input from Slash, Billy Gibbons, Ringo Starr, Joe Elliott, Metallica's Robert Trujillo, Heartbreaker Mike Campbell, Todd Rungren, Wilco's Jeff Tweedy, Dean and Robert DeLeo of Stone Temple Pilots, Aerosmith's Brad Whitford, movie star musos Johnny Depp and Billy Bob Thornton and more.

"It was like: I shouldn't be doing this at my age, so that's another reason to do it."

It's a thrilling record that reminds you of why you like rock'n'roll in the first place. Smart, ballsy, touching, defiant.

"It's an intelligent racket," shrugs Hunter. "We sent the right tracks to the right people."

So here he is at 83 with his foot on the monitor delivering one of the hardest rock albums he's done in years, with guys from Guns N' Roses and Metallica. "Why not? That's why the album is called *Defiance*. 'What's he doing making a rock'n'roll album?' But it came naturally. There was no plan. I just kept writing and that's what came out.

"I just wake up in the morning and there's an idea. I don't write for business. If it comes, it comes. And I just got on a *tear*."

ROSS HALFIN/PRESS

Mott The Hoople in 1971 (l-r): Mick Ralphs, Verden Allen, Ian Hunter, Pete Overend Watts, Dale Griffin.

"[My dad and I] never got on. He was a cop and I was looking for excitement. So, y'know, I would do exciting things, and that didn't go down that well."

So Covid was an unexpected inspiration?
Well, I'm lively. And if there's nothing else to do, you might as well. Plus, it was like: I shouldn't be doing this at my age, so that's another reason to do it. When we came off the road with the Rant Band, it'd been 10 years of album after tour and it felt like time for change. I wasn't quite sure what that change would be but, you know, you just sit down and write. And then I had Mike, and there's another guy, [photographer] Ross Halfin – do you know Ross Halfin?

I do know Ross. Very well.
Ross has been a mate of mine for a long time. I'm one of the few people he hasn't fallen out with.

Oh, give it time, Ian.
I'll tell you why I like him: because he tells you what to do to take a good picture. I'm no good at that. He's like: "Chin up, chin down, move this way, move that way". It's great to do that because then you don't have to think about it. But between him and Mike Kobayashi, they were saying, "How about somebody else doing your songs?" And I sent them a couple and then it was like, "Well, Slash likes this one. Billy Gibbons will do that one." And that's how it started. I kept writing and they kept getting people involved. And Andy York, who was co-producer with me, we suggested people too. I suggested Ringo, because [first single] *Bed Of Roses* is his groove. It's a head-nodder. He said, "Well, if I like it, I'll do it, if I don't, I won't." Fortunately he liked it. It was all off-hand. The whole thing's been a fluke – a lovely fluke.

But slowly but surely a lot of people were interested or involved or, you know, Ross forced them [chuckles]. And then sometimes you had to wait because people were out touring. I had no idea these people even knew who I was.

Ross is really good at bringing people together like that. Back in 2016, we held the Classic Rock Awards in Tokyo and Ross put the house band together – Joe Perry, Johnny Depp, Dean and Rob DeLeo and so on.
I met him at the Classic Rock Awards. I didn't know the guy, but I liked the way he treated you, the way he told you what to do.

I've known Johnny Depp for a while and he was in the studio with Jeff and he said, "We'll do a couple". We sent them a couple of songs. One's on the first album, one's on the second. Johnny asked me to do a Vampires gig, so I came to New York and that's when I met Robert DeLeo. And he was a lovely bloke. So I rang him and we went back and forth. His brother Dean was interested and Dean rang and said, "Our drummer would like to do it as well." So things developed that way.

Did you know Jeff Beck before this?
I've been out with Jeff one night because, again, Ross said, "Why don't you come down for dinner?" And it turned out to be with Jeff and Johnny Depp. And we had a great night out, went for an Indian.

So all those years you were a part of the sixties and seventies rock scene, you never met Jeff Beck?
I met him once in New York. But I didn't know the guy. The thing with Jeff is: it's got to be absolutely right. So even when he's done it, he's got to sign off on it. We were worried for a while because he didn't sign off. And that's another thing. It's not only getting these people to do it – that's

Hollywood Vampires in Brooklyn in 2016: (l-r) Joe Perry, Robert DeLeo, Ian Hunter, Johnny Depp, Alice Cooper and Tommy Henriksen.

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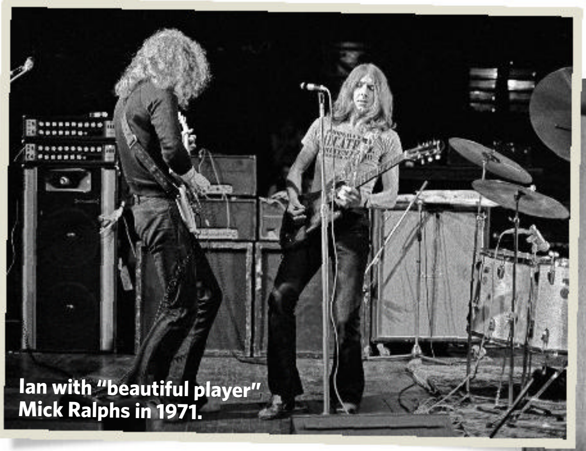
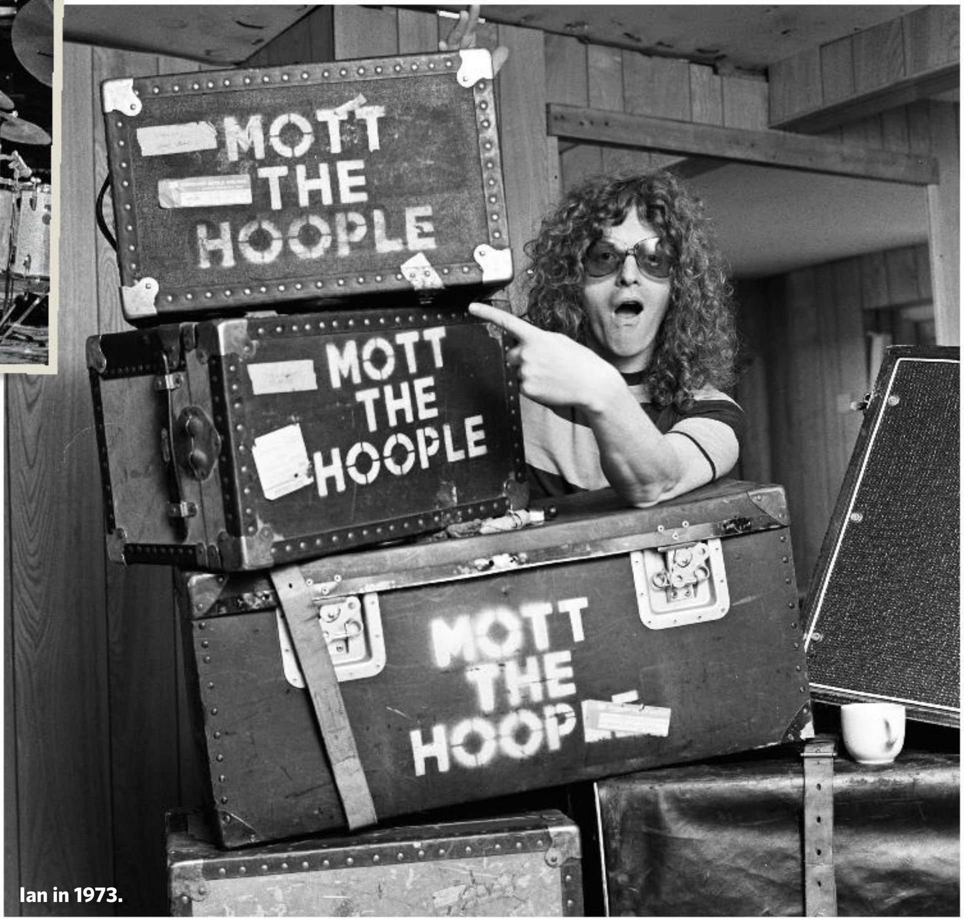

Ian with "beautiful player" Mick Ralphs in 1971.



Ian in 1973.

the easy bit – it's the managers and the lawyers, after the fact. But he finally signed off just before Christmas. And then he got ill over Christmas. That was scary.

It was such a shock.
It was a shock. Same with Taylor. I mean, I didn't really know these people. I had met Taylor briefly in a LA in a hotel. He said, "You were in that band whaddyacallit?" And I went, "And you're in that band whaddyacallit". He said, "If the Foos ever come to New York, will you get up?" And I said, "Yeah." I never did. It was just one of those things, a guy you meet on the way. Then my manager Mike's saying "Oh, I had him on the phone for about an hour and a half – he knows everything." And that's when I started talking to Taylor.

He wanted to do it all. We sent him some tracks and he rang me up and said, "Look, I want to do all of this." But Covid started easing off and the Foos started going out again, so in the end he did seven tracks. Three on the first album and four on the second. He was gonna do them all. Amazing guy.

He seemed like a real music fan.
He was going on about *Standing In My Light* off *Schizophrenic* [*You're Never Alone With A Schizophrenic*, 1979, Hunter's fourth solo album]. That's why I say a bit like Joe Elliott, because Joe's encyclopedic. Taylor was the same. Such an upper to talk to. You could talk to him for hours. Full of life. He just came off as a guy who was just so full of enthusiasm, ready to go 24 hours a day. It was a real shock to me.

And what did he bring to the songs?
He's a great drummer. He's one of the best in the world. I sent him one song, a ballad called *Angel*. All he was supposed to do was drum on it. It came back with harmonies, he'd put a lead solo on the back end of it, he got Duff McKagan of Guns N' Roses to do the bass on it. And the harmonies he did! Andy and me were like: "Well, it's *done*." An incredible guy.

What about Robert Trujillo from Metallica?
Robert did a movie about Jaco Pastorius [famous as the legendary bassist for Joni Mitchell and Weather Report, some of Jaco's first recorded work was with Ian Hunter], and I did an interview with him. During the course of that he said, "If anything ever comes up, I'm happy to do something." So we sent him *Defiance*, which Slash was already on, and he used Jaco's original fretless bass, the same one that Jaco had used on *All American Alien Boy* [Hunter's second studio album from 1976]. So that was a neat little story. The combination of the two of them is absolutely

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"I just wake up in the morning and there's an idea. If it comes, it comes. And I just got on a *tear*."

great. There's a point at the end of the first solo that Slash does on *Defiance* where they both kind of finish up the solo together. It intermingles, even though they came from different studios. That happened a few times. A lot of flukes happened. We were dead lucky.

This is obviously a different way of working for you. You've spent years working with people in the studio, looking them in the eye.
And going on last. Here I was going on first. They weren't supposed to be the final vocals or anything but then Dean DeLeo's calling up saying, "Don't change the vocals!" Because they were playing to the vocals.

We did that on *Once Bitten Twice Shy* [Hunter's only solo UK top 20 hit, from 1975] – the drums went on last. It's not a bad way to do it, because then everybody understands the lyric. Normally when you go in, nobody knows what the lyric is, they just play the song. I remember [Mott bassist] Watts saying, "I never knew what you were on about!" He was just learning how to play it.

The *Rant* album [2001] seemed to usher in a new Ian Hunter, one that was more rootsy: acoustic rock'n'roll, with piano, a bed of acoustic guitars, that sort of instrumentation. But *Defiance* is very electric guitar rock, isn't it?
It's a rock'n'roll album. It's probably out of its time but that's what it is.

It feels like you hit a theme and maybe working with these guys gave you the confidence to rock a little bit harder. Because for all you're saying, there was no plan, it feels perfect: it opens with a song called *Defiance* and closes with *This Is What I'm Here For* – a defiant rock song.
You're right. As these people came in, I got more excited. And it came quicker because of that.

Tell me about *This Is What I'm Here For*. What are you here for?
To play music, y'know. I was 18, 19 when I heard Jerry Lee Lewis. Up until that time I didn't have a clue what I was here for. Didn't have a clue. You've got the factory and that's it. All of a sudden, I heard *Whole Lotta Shakin'*. "Ah, okay – *that's* what I'm here for." The only trouble was, I wasn't very good so I had to work at it.

I was a bass player. We did a lot of work in Germany and places like that, where you played every night, and slowly but surely, I got started. I played bass with Freddie "Fingers" Lee and he was like, "You write a decent song." I wasn't ▷

On stage with Mott The Hoople at The Royal Albert Hall in 1971.

Ian (far left) in 1968 as bassist for Freddie 'Fingers' Lee – inspecting Freddie's left foot with which he played the piano.

"I went in one day and he said, 'The Doors are looking for a singer and they mentioned you, would you like to do it?'"

thinking about singing, I was just thinking about trying to get into the songwriting business. And I got into it – I was at [publishing company] Francis, Day & Hunter as a songwriter. Remember Dave Berry? He did one of mine [Berry recorded a Hunter song called *And I Have Learned To Dream* in 1967] and Nicol Williamson, the actor, he did one [*Season's Song*, 1970] That's before Mott. I was staff writer, just out of the factory, and then into Mott. And when I got into Mott, the two writers were Mick Ralphs and Pete Watts. Pete was lazier than I was, and he was also the good-looking one in the band, always off with models. So he was like: "You do it." None of us knew at the time that publishing was where the money was. Pete was like, "I'm busy, you do it." That's how Ralpher and me got to be the writers in Mott.

Richard Jobson of the Skids told me that he went to see Mott supported by Alex Harvey in either Edinburgh or Glasgow. He said that Alex Harvey left a hole in the stage – I guess he smashed a guitar or something – and you guys had to play around it.

[Laughing] I remember Alex! What's that place with the big high stage in Glasgow?

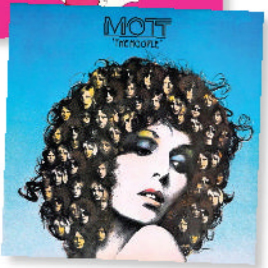
Glasgow Apollo [then called Green's Playhouse].

The Apollo, yeah. They used to give you a statue if you sold it out. Alex Harvey supported us there – his brother was there and his mother, I met them all in the afternoon – Alex was lovely. That place: the first thing they showed was the back door out of the dressing room. That was your escape route. Because if they liked you, they would go like, "Yer fucking brilliant!" and they'd smack you. And if they didn't like you, you were dead. The guy came in to give us the award for selling the place out, and he's got a bandage on, with blood coming through the bandage. The front doors were glass and they'd opened late that night, so the crowd had used him as *a battering ram* to get in. He was apologetic! I'm like, "You're *bleeding*!" But that was the norm.

The Sensational Alex Harvey Band and Mott The Hoople were two of the few older bands that the punk generation looked up to and accepted.

I didn't think it was gonna be like that. I thought it was gonna be like: "Old guys out!" We went to see [punk band] Chelsea one night and Mick [Ronson] got chased. But I was alright. Everywhere you went, everybody adored Mick, so it was strange that this would happen, y'know? He was like: "Fuck me! What the fuck was that?" I thought: *for once* – because all the girls loved Mick – for once I get to be adored, instead of you.

England in those days: everything changed completely and everybody hated everything that came before. I mean, I hated flower power and those blues guys that looked at their feet while they played. So I got it. It just goes through changes.



It feels like it hasn't changed much in the past few years.

Because everybody's glued to the computer. I don't know. I mean, it's none of my business. My wife talks to this *ball* that's in the kitchen. It does whatever she wants it to.

You don't talk to it?

No, I'm not that advanced. It's not an analogue thing. I'm too old to get into it. It's so fast. I'm an analogue chap. Fortunately, Andy

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York is not. He's totally into that kind of thing, so that helps.

Both you and Alex Harvey were Scottish or had Scottish heritage. Do you think that some of your piss and vinegar came from that?
I've no idea. My mum was English, my dad was Scottish. My grandma had an organ and a piano-accordion. She was a bit of a girl, my grandma. She was married a few times, she was in the Rotary and all that kind of thing. She played various instruments. She was the only one in our family that was musically inclined. Everybody else was normal. My dad was a cop, my uncle was a bus driver. Perfectly normal, apart from my grandma.

There's a song on the album *No Hard Feelings* that sounds like it's a song about a father.
Yeah, that's a dead-on true story.

***'I'm gonna make a man out of you/If it's the last thing I ever do.'* Those are the actual words your dad would use?**
We never got on. He was a cop and I was looking for excitement. So, y'know, I would do exciting things, or my mates would, and that didn't go down that well. I don't know what he thought. I was a different animal. But he was a noble sort of guy. He did 25 years in the police force, he was in the war, he ended up in MI5. A very straight, noble sort of bloke. And he got lumbered with me. My brother was okay. He was more seriously-minded. But all I seemed to want was excitement. And I went looking for that wherever it was. And some of those places, you know, my father didn't agree with. It wasn't easy.

But at one point, I was in the shit up to my eyeballs, and he gave me 200 quid. That was a lot of money in them days. But that 200 quid gave me six months and during that time I met Bill Farley [engineer on the first Stones and Kinks albums, among many others] at Regent Sounds in London, and that was where the auditions for Mott were held. It was Bill who rang me up and said "Come down". So indirectly, my dad gave me that little timeframe when I needed money. He came through when it mattered. So that's what the song's about.

I saw you play in Milton Keynes a few years ago. Afterwards I came back to say hello and you had a load of old mates from Northampton there. It seemed like a close group of old pals.
Yeah. The thing was excitement. You couldn't get it in those days. Regular people were not exciting and I was on this quest for excitement. I was working for British Timken [a factory that produced roller bearings for the car industry] in Northampton at the time. That was boring. Everything was boring. And then I happened to meet a couple of naughty boys. I got introduced into the naughty boys' society, and I was on the fringe, but it was exciting. The humour was incredible – and it wasn't stupid humour, it was really clever. They could make a little escapade into an hour of hilarity. And all I had to do was play *Danny Boy* or something and I was in.

The one thing naughty boys love is rock'n'roll. The London mafia loved rock'n'roll. It was like: "Get your gear and fuck off" and then Freddie 'Fingers' Lee goes [mimics piano playing] a bit of Jerry Lee and all of a sudden we would be the life and soul of the party. Free drink, free everything. Villains always love rock'n'roll music.

What kind of villainy are we talking about?
Various types, y'know. I mean, some of these guys are still living. But they were exciting.

Ian with Joe Elliott at London's High Voltage Festival in 2010.

"When you're not that great a singer, you have to phrase a lot to get it across. It's the Dylan approach, a character approach."

At the High Voltage festival in 2010, the plug was pulled too early on your set with Joe Elliott and the Down N' Outz and it ended with a bit of a backstage brawl. Afterwards, you and Jimmy Page were laughing about it saying, "It's just like the sixties!"
Yeah. You've gotta remember, it was pretty boring in the sixties. I lived in Shropshire, which is agricultural. There's not much going on. Northampton was different. Northampton was full of life in them days.

Am I right in thinking that you had a bit of a fearsome reputation. People were quite intimidated by you, weren't they?
I don't know. David [Bowie] was. David thought I'd been in a motorcycle gang. And he wasn't far off, y'know. It wasn't a motorcycle gang, I dunno how to ride a motorbike. But David gravitated towards people he thought were a bit naughty.

Since his death, Bowie's talked about like he was some kind of saint. But you were never close – why not?
David was a different kettle of fish. You know how people are. You go to a party, you get on with some people, you don't get on with other people. Not because you don't *like* them or they don't like you, just because they're accountants or they're lawyers – they're in a different neck of the woods to you. David was great all the time I knew him, but he wasn't a guy I would have hung out with. Nothing personal. We got on fine in the studio. I went out with him a couple of times, but I don't make mates easy. I never did. And when I do ▷

With Jimmy Page at the Classic Rock Awards in 2013.

TOP: GETTY; BOTTOM: ROSS HALFIN

Performing *All The Young Dudes* with Bowie, Mick Ronson and Queen at Wembley's Freddie Mercury Tribute concert in 1992.

"David [Bowie] was great all the time I knew him, but he wasn't a guy I would have hung out with. Nothing personal. We got on fine in the studio. I don't make mates easy. I never did."

make a mate, it's for life. He was a friend like lots of people you meet along the way. David was extremely ambitious. He'd been around.

He was determined and he was ambitious. I wasn't – I just wanted to play rock'n'roll because it excited me. But David saw a whole lot more and was going for it, 24 hours a day. He just wasn't the type I would hang out with. But generous to a tee, lovely with the band. I mean, he gave us *Dudes*. I've got nothing but praise for David.

I think I look at it from the Mick Ronson angle and he seems really ruthless – the way he got rid of the Spiders – which seems like something he did throughout his career. He picked up people and then…
If you want to be that big, you're gonna have to be ruthless. I never wanted that. The fortnight I was in the first division, it got on my nerves. I didn't like it. First of all, you've got to plan years ahead, and all the rest of it. It stops becoming music, it stops becoming rock'n'roll and starts becoming business. David knew he wanted to be a monster. In a good way. When you want it that bad, you get it. If you've got the talent, which he did.

You' talked about the period after *Dudes* when you hit a purple patch and wrote *All The Way From Memphis* and all those classic songs. What had you learned – what changed?
It's the press, isn't it? It always comes down to the press [chuckles]. 'You're living on David Bowie,' y'know – 'You can't do anything yourselves'. David wanted to do another one but it was like, 'No way: because then we just become servants to you.' So then of course me and Mick [Ralphs] were panic-stricken, trying to write a hit for about nine months. And it was difficult because I'm limited as a singer. Mick would write these more soulful, blues kind of things, y'know, which Paul Rodgers [Bad Company] eventually sang. He was the right kind of guy to sing Mick's songs. I couldn't do them. That's the beginning of the end right there. My songs started coming through. We had to do that to get away from the David tag.

That was defiance then, too. The press said you were living in Bowie's shadow. And you were like, "Fuck you, we'll show you".
Still, to this day, it's *All The Young Dudes*. It wasn't even the biggest seller. The thing with *Dudes* was that it represented something. That's what separated it from all the other songs. It was special. We knew that the minute we heard it. And it's not a bad song to be tagged with either. There's some horrible songs that people have been tagged with. It's a great song.

Look at Jeff Beck and *Hi Ho Silver Lining*. He went to his death sort of hating that song.
Well, you know, at least it ain't *Chirpy Chirpy Cheep Cheep*. People say: 'Why do you do that [*Dudes*] every night?' Well, because people want to hear it every night. It's a great song. God knows why he gave it to us. I've said that many times, but really, if I'd've had that song I wouldn't have given it to anybody. I think we caught him just right, because he had recorded it and wasn't happy with it. He'd done it in C, and we did it in D. Our's was a little higher, you know, and then Phally [Verdan Allen]'s organ was great. I think [Bowie] learned a bit from the way he'd done it with his band. That's why it came out as well as it did.

Maybe he wanted to make his name as a producer, at that time. Writing and producing a hit like that was no small thing.
Yeah. He was fabulous in the studio. He wanted to do the rest of the album, so we did. It didn't make any sense to me. It's like, "If you can write songs like this, get out there and do it. You're the one with a big ambition and all that." But somehow we had time for Iggy, he had time for Lou, you know. Pretty special.

[We talk for a bit about Mick Ralphs. Mick had a stroke in 2016. Hunter still speaks to him by phone.] The first time I met Mick Ralphs was when you brought him to the Classic Rock Awards. I got to know him a little later. He's a lovely guy.
Yeah, he's a West Country kinda guy. Great humour. Short little jokes. Kept himself to himself

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"Everybody thought we were on some sophisticated British drug that they weren't privy to. And we were on light ale."

With Mick Ralphs at Hammersmith Apollo in 2009.

but great to be with in a band. A beautiful player. Underplayed. Like Mike Campbell in a way – played for the song. 100 per cent. Same with Ronson. There's two kind of guitar players: the ones that play for themselves and the ones who play for the song. I like the guys that play for the song because I'm a songwriter. Back to Bowie: I mean, that was Mick's intro on *All the Young Dudes*. That's a great intro.

Let's talk about the seventies in rock music. There's lots of bad behaviour. Lots of drugs, lots of booze. Did you ever feel like you were going down a slippery slope?
No. Mott wasn't like that. The weird thing was, everyone thought they were – especially over here [in the US] – because of the name. "Mott The Hoople – what the fuck is that?" I remember San Francisco, everybody was clamouring and asking us what we were on, because they thought we were on some sophisticated British drug that they weren't privy to. And we were on light ale.

Later on, was different, I suppose. Y'know, you have a look but it was like: "Four hours up, four hours down, that's no good. That's not value for money." I really don't see it and I really don't recommend it to any kids coming up. Look at the opioid shit we're in the middle of. You've got to be in control, you can't let it control you. I wouldn't advise it. It doesn't help. You might get one song out of it, but that's it. And the cells never forget. A friend of mine says that: the cells never forget. It always comes back to haunt you.

In *Diary Of A Rock And Roll Star* there's a mention of groupies – the ladies of the hallway and so on. People are now looking back at the seventies and asking, "Were these women being exploited by bands?"
Aw, forget it. If you're in a band with Ronson, there's one outside the door, there's one outside the elevator, you come out to the ground floor there's another one there, in the breakfast room there's two waiting for him there. These were poor downtrodden people. Some of them *travelled* – I mean, girls were all over the place. Not really for *me*. I was never that God's-gift looking bloke. But I played with a few that were, you know. There were ladies all over the place. It was a different time, you can't equate it with now.

But you could see how people could take advantage of them – in more than just the obvious way.
Mick would never actually bother. The thing with Mick was that he liked to pull 'em. He liked to be the best-looking bloke in the room. All the girls wanted him. On the odd occasion that they wanted somebody else, he was horrified. "What are you talking about? It's *me* you're supposed to be looking at!" Because he was so used to it. Girls would travel, girls would be around, and some of them were really genuine: they were really into music and all the rest of it. I remember one girl travelling, and she had a two-year-old with her. And [Mott guitarist] Luther Grosvenor took her in a room and said, "You get on the bus and you go back to San Francisco where you come from because this kid should not be on the road". And Luther gave her the money. That's Ariel Bender for ya.

We're in the hotel in LA and they're sitting outside on the kerb all night. This would horrify girls nowadays, but it was how it was then. But what're you trying to get at here, c'mon?

I'm just trying to get a sense of it. You lived through some of rock's best years, I suppose, which in some ways are looked at now as problematic. People are looking back at, say, Steven Tyler and going: "Why did he have a teenage girlfriend? Was that appropriate?"
I don't know. I'm not really qualified to talk about what Steve did. I know a lot of guys had pasts, you know what I mean. But that's how *life* is. With everybody, not just people in rock'n'roll.

You're on Sun Records, the same label as Elvis and Jerry Lee. How did that happen?
When I auditioned for Mott, my audition was in Regents Sound in Denmark Street. Jimi Hendrix, Little Richard – all them people – they all rehearsed or played there at some point. That was the beginning. And the American equivalent of that has got to be Sun Records in Memphis. Howlin' Wolf, Johnny Cash, Jerry Lee – I'm doing this for your readers – all these people started there. Have you been there?

Sun Studios? I have. I loved it.
I get the strangest vibe when I'm in there. It's like a room full of ghosts. Mike said to me, "Sun Records are going to re-form. How would that feel?" And I was like, "I've got to be on it! The yellow label!" I'm like a fucking four-year-old. So it worked out. If these are my last two records, it's almost like: Regents Sound. Sun Records. That's where it all started and this is where it all ends. It's kind of poetic in a way.

We'll see how it goes. I've got *Part 2* to finish, you know. But then already I'm writing for *Part 3*. Not because I want to, just because, y'know, you wake up in the morning and go, "That's not bad". We'll see what happens. Maybe these records will do OK, maybe they'll stiff, who knows?

How do you judge? How can you decide if something's a success anymore?
No, it's not at all like it was and I'm not particularly interested in how it is. So I just write what I write.

I think people are gonna love this record.
I hope they do, you know. But I don't think I'm gonna get a lot of new people because people are into new music, you know. That's the way they grew up. It's the way everybody grows up. It's what they're used to.

You've gotta assume that people who are interested in Taylor Hawkins, or who like Slash or Jeff Beck, they'll check this record out, and be interested in the connection.
It's very, very special record to me, put it like that. For all of them people to be nice enough to do it, and to do it as well as they've done it, is great in itself. It's a lovely feeling. So if it goes no further, I'm a very happy man. Because it's a special record.

But you earned it. Forget the classic albums: you've been making great records for the past 10-15 years.
I've enjoyed making them. The Rant Band has been great. We've been together 20 years now. It was time to do something different but I never realised it was gonna turn into *this*. It's been fabulous. It takes a lot to make an old chap like me excited. I'm like a teenager again, y'know, with the music. All these people got me excited again.

Tell me about the song *Guernica*.
I was in Madrid. The gallery was down the road [Museo Reina Sofía] and I stood looking at that thing for about 45 minutes. It's just symbolism, I guess. It just stayed on my mind. The weird ▷

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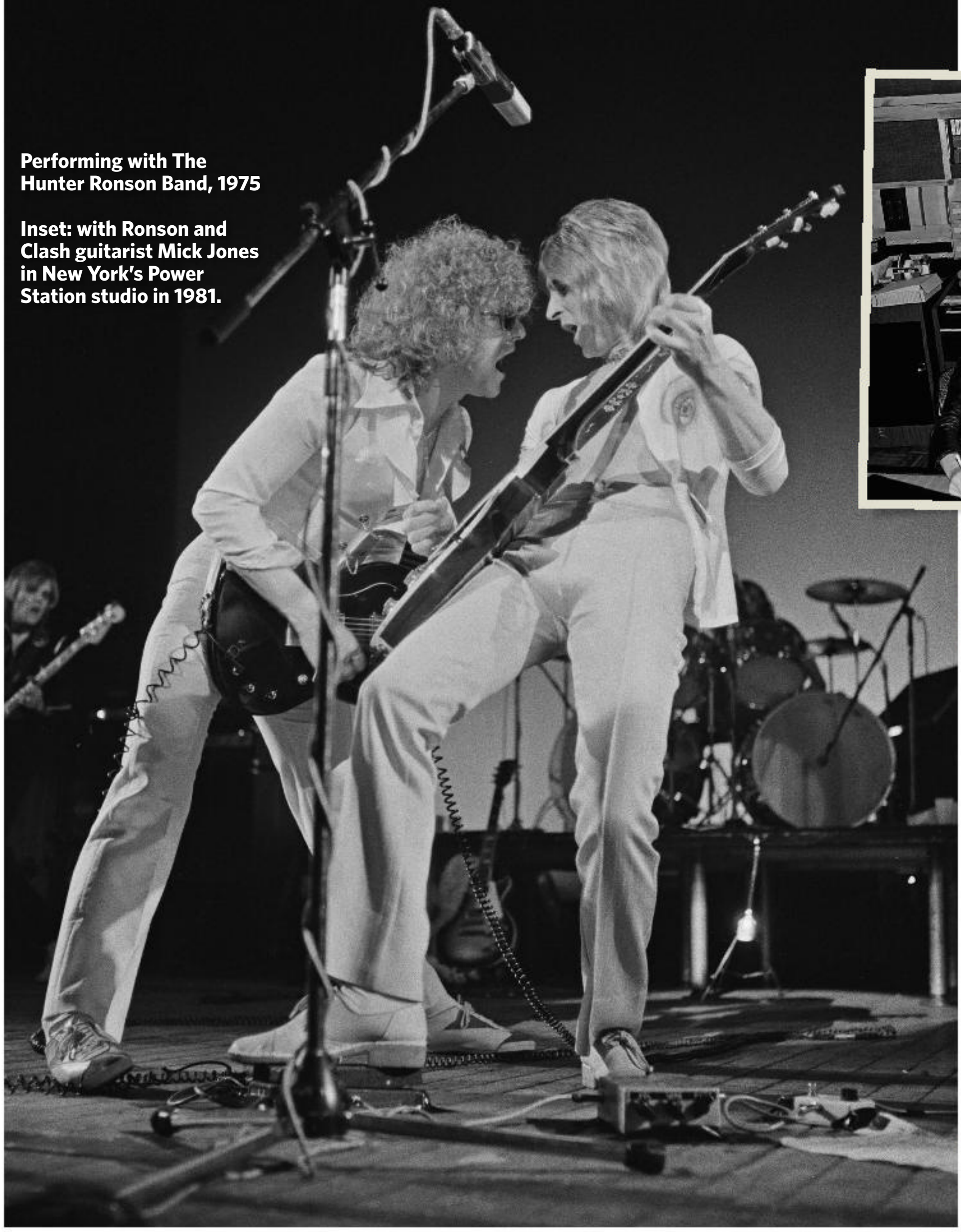


Performing with The Hunter Ronson Band, 1975

Inset: with Ronson and Clash guitarist Mick Jones in New York's Power Station studio in1981.

"The thing with ...*Dudes* was that it represented something. It was special."

thing was, I had a place on the south coast for a while – a place called The Beach House in Worthing. It was apartments right on the seafront, and it turns out that the Guernica survivors, the children, were all put in The Beach House. I read this recently, after I'd written the song, but there's a connection: I lived in the same house as the survivors from Guernica.

You worked with Guy Stevens, Bernard Edwards, Roy Thomas Baker: what producer had the most influence, in terms of bringing ideas and vision to the music?

Guy. This is going back. Guy would just stand in front of you and scream at you. "You're great! You're better than the Stones!" And I guess it probably had an effect because we were all new to it.

I've never really had producers. The biggest help has been three engineers and that's Bill Price in England – he wound up at Wessex but he was at AIR when we did *Mott* and *The Hoople* – and then Bob Clearmountain in New York and the guy we're working with now, James Fraser. He's absolutely brilliant.

Bill Price – who produced or engineered albums by Mott, Wings, Roxy Music, Badfinger, The Clash, The Pretenders , even Guns N' Roses – is an unsung hero of British rock, isn't he?

Oh, people just don't know. I mean, he did the Pistols. I mean, he got beat up with the Pistols. There's a pub round the corner and they went in there one night and a fight broke out and Bill was one of the guys on the receiving end. Bill was fabulous. I mean, Bill was like James – he was ahead of ya. I mean, you'd be talking about it and by the time you finish the conversation, it was there in front of you. He would get Mick Jones [producer of *Short Back 'n' Sides*, 1981] eight tracks just to fuck with. All different echoes and reverbs, because Mick was into all different sounds. He would just give him his own little sort of mixing session on the side. But he'd come in with 100 cigarettes every day. A hundred Dunhill. And smoke 'em all.

So while Guy Stevens was in your face screaming and shouting and smashing furniture, Bill was the one actually doing the technical stuff.

Roxy Music were in AIR One and we were in AIR Two. Eno and Bryan Ferry came down one night. We were doing the *Mott* album, and we were trying to get hold of Mike Leander [the producer and arranger who had arranged the string parts for The Beatles' *She's Leaving Home* but was better known at the time as the man responsible for that big Gary Glitter sound] or Roy from Wizzard and we weren't having much luck. And they both said, "Well, why? You don't need a producer. It sounds great." And that was really because of Bill. So you know, we just carried on. And it worked. Til Ralpher left.

I read a thing where you said some songs are "prefabricated" – and then there's the good stuff. I took that to mean that sometimes you feel like you're writing clichés, or to a formula. But when it's good, you know you've hit on something special. How do you know the difference?

I'm kind of on 24 hours a day. You can be watching TV and somebody says something and it kind of relates to the lyric you might be working on. I'll think, "Yeah, I can twist that". I have to think vocally as well because I only sound good if I'm singing a certain way. I'm not that great a vocalist. When you're not that great a singer, you have to phrase a lot to get it across. It's the Dylan approach, a character approach. Like, "Yeah, I could get my chops around that". And if there's a bit of humour there, you know, or a double entendre, I like doing that. A lot of it's basically grammar. English grammar.

You mean like enjoying words and playing with language?

Yeah. Sometimes you're getting the point across but you're preaching. Or it's too serious. You try and grab something. It happens in *Bed Of Roses*. It happens in *Angel*, a couple of times, y'know: *'I want my angels to be perfect/Except on Saturdays'* [chuckles] The track comes back [from Taylor Hawkins] with all these dead serious harmonies and all the rest of it and I'm thinking, 'I hope nobody notices'. But it lightens it up, y'know?

Are there any of your songs that you thought would have done better than they have? For example, I think *You Nearly Did Me In* or *Irene Wilde* from *All American Alien Boy* are the kind of songs that could be played on radio every day of the week.

At the time Columbia Records had AM and FM

GETTY x2

Mott The Hoople's 40th anniversary reunion at Hammersmith Apollo in 2009.

acts. AM was the singles market and the FM was the album market and they felt that Mott was an FM band so they wouldn't push any singles because that would put us into the AM market. I kept saying, "But the Rolling Stones seem to do okay in both departments". But they wouldn't have it. They said the same to Ten Years After.

There are various reasons why things don't happen, you know. Presidents get fired. That happened to me on Polygram. You've got an album coming out and all of a sudden, the President gets fired and with him all his mates. So the new lot come in, you know, and nothing the last guy did was good. And I've been on little labels too. You get a song like *When The World Was Round* [*Shrunken Heads*, 2007]. It had a great video too. If it'd had a bigger label behind it, I thought that might have been a hit. And yeah, it's a drag, because you put a lot of effort into this stuff, for very little return.

That's the song that comes to mind. I think the words are great, but what can you do? It is what it is. I was out with the Rant Band, I was having a great time and with the little labels, you don't do much record-wise but you do a lot of merch while you're on the road. So it works out fine.

GETTY

And it's nice for your audience. It might be small comfort, but the fact that you've never been a superstar has meant that your audience gets to see you in smaller venues rather than huge soulless arenas.
Yeah, I've always liked that. People think I'm lying to audiences when I say that. But anything between 500 and 2500 maybe, they're amazing places to play, because you can see people and they can see you. I'm not fond of the arena shit.

"The one thing naughty boys love is rock'n'roll. The London mafia loved rock'n'roll."

I read recently that you were once asked to front The Doors. What's the story there?
There was a guy, I forget his name, but he worked for an agency – ICM or something like that, one of the New York agencies – and I went in one day and he said, "The Doors are looking for a singer and they mentioned you, would you like to do it?" I said, "No!" [Laughs] Because Jim Morrison looked like God and I looked like an average bloke.

There's a gig south of LA, about 60 miles down the road there, I can't remember the name of it now, but I found out quite recently that The Doors came to one of the shows I did there. Two of them came. So maybe it was true. This was around about '75/'76, somewhere around there. This agency guy, he always had a gun on his desk. Which was weird, y'know.

Can you reveal anything about *Defiance, Part 2*?
I think it's a bit heavier, a bit more serious. On the first one, you know, we were we were in the middle of Covid and Trump and all that, so I wanted it to be on the light side. The next one's a tad heavier. As things were getting to me [laughs]. Not that heavy, just a tad more political in places. It's supposed to be entertainment, not ramming shit down people's necks who are already fed up.

But there's a lot to be angry about right now, isn't there?
That's one of the reasons why this album is not angry. I didn't want that. But I couldn't help myself on the second one. ●

Defiant Pt. 1 is out April 21 on Sun Records.

THE MAGIC FLUTE

The second new **Jethro Tull** album in two years, *Rökflöte*, explores Ragnarök, the Norse interpretation of the apocalypse. So naturally, we spoke to Ian Anderson about the end of the world.

Words: **Dave Everley**

There was a period during the late 70s and early 80s when Ian Anderson began making plans for the end of the world. Born in 1947, he was a child of the Cold War, and the threat of nuclear annihilation had been a permanent presence throughout his life. "It always seemed entirely possible that all of this could end before I had reached manhood," he says.

Now, thanks to a combination of escalating East-West tensions and having become a first-time father a few years earlier at the age of 30, the Jethro Tull singer's fears were more intense than ever. The fact that Anderson and his family lived just a few miles away from RAF High Command near High Wycombe in Buckinghamshire didn't help matters.

"It was, for sure, a hard target for the Russians," he says. "I wasn't exactly a survivalist, but I did think quite seriously about an escape plan, what to do if the proverbial hit the fan."

"I wasn't exactly a survivalist, but I did think quite seriously about an escape plan."

Ian Anderson

This escape plan, he says, involved getting the hell out of Buckinghamshire as quickly as possible should the balloon go up. "There were two fuelled-up vehicles, and probably 30 gallons of petrol stashed away. They were the days of easier gun ownership, and there were some fairly serious-looking armaments that I would not have left at home as well."

As it turned out, real-life nuclear armageddon never came, although a fictional version rears its head on Jethro Tull's 23rd album, the Norse mythology-inspired *RökFlöte*. More than once Anderson invokes Ragnarök – the vivid, devastating version of the end times as detailed in the *Poetic Edda*, the 13th century collection of poems that relate the tales of the Norse gods.

"This day of reckoning, the end of days scenario is familiar in a multiplicity of religions," he says. "When the theme for the album began to unfold itself, I was drawn to Ragnarök." He raises a knowing eyebrow. "It's a very opportune subject, given the times we're living in." ▷

WILL IRELAND

It's 9.30am when Anderson appears on the other end of a Zoom screen. He's sitting in an office in the 18th century Wiltshire manor house he's lived in for almost 30 years, having long ago vacated Buckinghamshire. He should have called half an hour earlier, except a typo on his part meant he got the time for our interview wrong. He's in a grumpy mood, grumbling that he spends much of his time at the moment copying and pasting links for calls like this. He'd planned to go supermarket shopping with his wife, but that's fallen by the wayside.

"I'm wrestling every day with so many fucking interviews," he says testily. "I'm supposed to be a musician on tour. Anyway, it's nice to be popular."

The reason for the current demand on his time is *RökFlöte*, which arrives just over a year after 2022's *The Zealot Gene*, itself the first album of all-new Jethro Tull material since 1999. "I'm a bit like your local bus service," he says, the tetchiness starting to dissipate. "You wait 20-odd years, then two come along at once."

RökFlöte is a decent late-period Jethro Tull album. The wild-haired, swivel-eyed spirit that animated their classic early records is long gone, but its gentle musical touch is offset by the lyrical richness that is Anderson's signature. Where *The Zealot Gene* drew inspiration from the Bible, using it as a springboard to explore everything from the rise of right wing populism to mankind's eternal propensity for conflict and war, *RökFlöte* draws on an entirely different, equally fanciful belief system: Norse pagan mythology. Each of *RökFlöte*'s songs begins with a stanza that is descriptive of a different Norse god, before the next three stanzas place those characters in the present day. "Which to me is an amusing thought," says Anderson.

"This day of reckoning, the end of days scenario is familiar in a multiplicity of religions."

Ian Anderson

The title *RökFlöte* is the singer's little pun. It actually began life as a mostly instrumental album for flute named, with impressive literalism, *Rock Flute*, before Anderson fell down a rabbit hole that led to Valhalla.

"It's a subject I had utterly no fascination with," he says bluntly of the album's lyrical inspiration. "I probably steered clear of it because it's a fertile ground for those heavy metal and hard rock freak musicians who fantasise about that world. And having been aware of that mythology attracting the likes of [senior Nazi leader and occultist] Heinrich Himmler, I thought it was something I'd keep a distance from."

Asking what finally sparked his interest in the subject prompts an erudite if circuitous monologue that takes in his dislike of history classes at grammar school ("The only O-level I failed"), some long-held axe-grinding directed at the teacher of said subject ("A brutal, awful, little man, just like Vladimir Putin"), dodging Sunday school as a seven-year-old by hiding up a tree while wearing a kilt ("A little draughty, because like any true Scotsman, I was expected not to wear underwear") and a youthful fascination with "religions and beliefs and the cultures in which they have operated in different parts of the world at different points in history".

It's the latter that saw him eventually land on Norse mythology. "I thought maybe I should try and learn about this stuff," he says matter-of-factly. "I suppose I liked the fact that, in spite of the number of gods in the pantheon, there is still an underlying cosmic force, the creator spirit."

Anderson's fascination with religion and faith of all hues is fascinating in itself. He loves the idea of religion but can't commit to the actual 'faith' part of it. Or, as he so vividly puts it: "I lack the ability to do anything other than gently run my hands over the spiritual breasts and not squeeze too hard, in case I get sucked into the full act."

"It's always been something that fascinates me," he continues. "And I suppose as you get older, there's a bigger chance that you start to consider your own mortality and the degree to which it might all end all too soon." He grins devilishly. "Though I'm pretty determined that Roger Waters goes first."

The former Pink Floyd vocalist and bassist's name comes up more than once during our conversation. With his strident proclamations on the Israeli government's occupation of Palestinian territories (which he likens to "apartheid") and Putin's invasion of Ukraine (which he calls "not unprovoked"), Waters is a polarising figure these days. Anderson seems genuinely perplexed at his contemporary's willingness to loudly put his opinions out there, undaunted by the response.

"Why someone who's been doing it as long as he has is seemingly unable to act on the understanding that it's up to you to convey your ideas in a way that isn't going to get you a drubbing," says Anderson. "He's loose-tongued with his convictions, which seem to be a little confused and perhaps not based on reality. He goes out there ranting and raving, as many others do."

In fairness, Anderson doesn't shy away from addressing current geo-political events himself on *RökFlöte*. The knotty, Ragnarök-referencing *Hammer On Hammer* conjures images of prophesised divine devastation, before pivoting to the modern era. *'Vlad the bad, seethes and schemes/An empire past he must renew,'* sings Anderson, a not-so-oblique reference to the man in charge of the Kremlin.

"I'm not scared for me, but I am for my grandchildren," he says of the current situation in Eastern Europe. "I do get concerned for what they may be facing. But you can't worry about it forever, And I prefer to be optimistic, in thinking that Putin is the ultimate bluffmeister."

Anderson has friends in Russia, such as Boris Grebenshchikov, singer with ground-breaking 70s prog band Aquarium. "He's Russian to the core, but very anti- the current regime, just as he was very critical of the regime in his early life, when it was a very brave thing to even try and start a rock band." Anderson has another friend who works in the Russian media, with whom he has exchanged a few tentative emails. "He knows that I know that his emails are probably being monitored, so we've only skittered around the edges of it."

Tull themselves had a Russian tour booked for September 2022, though it was understandably cancelled when the invasion began seven months earlier. "We also had a concert in Kyiv in the early part of last year which went for a burton as well," says Anderson.

Flute power: Jethro Tull 2023 battle Ragnarök.

He has been trying to resurrect the Kyiv date, though the local promoter is adamant that it's way too early to safely take place. But part of Anderson wants to visit the country, if only to play a guerrilla gig. "Even if it's on a street corner," he says, eyes lighting up. "People who have done something like that, it's been such a boost for them [the people of Kyiv]. All of these things are part of a rallying cry. I guess, if I did it, it would be totally under the radar. I wouldn't want it to look like the cavalry coming over the hill. But forget the economics, it would be a very positive gesture."

As it stands, Tull's upcoming tour itinerary takes in altogether less hazardous places such as Budapest, Ghent, Durham and Shepherd's Bush. War zones or not, Anderson admits that being on the road isn't something he relishes.

"I'm a bit like your local bus service. You wait twenty-odd years, then two [albums] come along at once." Ian Anderson

ASSUNTA OPHAL/PRESS

"Touring has never filled me with great enjoyment. The concerts are the easy bits, because they're the reason you're there, but the travelling is the bit I don't enjoy."

Neither, he says, is he naturally disposed to being around a lot of other people, not least the members of his band. "We spend countless hours sitting on buses together and onstage at soundchecks, but the rest of the day I'm a loner. I'll spend the day wandering the street in the wet and rain, looking for the worst Indian restaurant in town, where I'll eat alone. They'll have breakfast together, then they'll meet in the lobby and go and do whatever it is they do together." He grimaces. "Weird buggers."

This unsociability is unlikely to change now, though touring at the age of 75 does have its upsides. He was diagnosed a few years ago with a manageable case of the inflammatory lung condition chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), and the physical activity of performing provides useful aerobic activity.

"Unlike others, who pay insane money to go to their local gym, I actually get paid for doing my exercises," he says. "And singing thousands of words every night is probably a good bit of mental training. It's all good reason to keep going, even if I wasn't really enjoying it. And I enjoy enough of it that I can't imagine those days really being over."

According to Anderson, he's already started thinking of the follow-up to *RökFlöte*, hoping to release it in late 2024. "There's another bus on the horizon," he says, returning to his local transport metaphor. "All being well. Assuming nothing gets me or I don't fall under a taxi."

Other major milestones are looming in the mid-future too. Anderson turns 80 in four years, and Jethro Tull will be 60 around the same time.

"Putting zeros on dates and ages is an attractive idea," he says. "I wouldn't say it's a target, though, because one day when I'm going for my usual medical check-up, I'm going to get some bad news. Most people, according to medical professionals, don't want to know. Whereas I take a view that if you go out there with your eyes open, there's more chance of seeing trouble on the horizon and being able to dodge down a side street and avoid it with the appropriate medical attention. So that's my hope," he cheerfully adds. "That I'm able to stave off the decline, both physically and mentally, that is inevitable."

With that our time is up. More interviews await, and that supermarket shop won't do itself. Armageddon hasn't got Ian Anderson yet. Age will have to wait a few more years too.

RökFlöte is out on April 21 via InsideOut

TIME BANDITS

Some bands are retro. Some bands are very retro. Dutch trio **DeWolff** take that to the max in everything they do, looking back for inspiration and feeding it into something new.

Words: **Polly Glass** Photos: **James Sharrock**

The 100 Club feels like a piece of living history. From the jazz artists of its inception in the 1940s to the blues and rock pioneers that filtered in over the coming decades, the people of its past still breathe in its red walls. It adds something to the atmosphere. A residual smokiness from days of chain-smoking hopefuls who became legends.

Under the watchful eyes of Son House, Mick Jagger, Muddy Waters and dozens more picture-framed heroes, tonight's millennial headliners saunter on stage to the old-world crackle of Howlin' Wolf's *Call Me The Wolf*. Chart-toppers in their native Holland but relatively new to the British live scene, this is DeWolff's first gig here in four years. A lot has happened in that time. Is there an appetite for another bunch of retro revivalists with a Led Zeppelin addiction and an obstinate reverence for all things analogue?

Except DeWolff are *not* just another bunch of retro revivalists.

Any suspicions of tired, dusty nostalgia porn are blow-torched within seconds. Their gear might be old (like, *really* old), but there's heat in those first chords. The matching suits. The looks on their faces. The high kick from 31-year-old frontman Pablo van de Poel. The sense that classic rock can still be exciting.

"Are you ready for some rock'n'roll?!" van de Poel shrieks, jacket open to reveal gold chains and a slim, boyish torso. "Are you ready, for the night traaaaiin!"

It should be laughable, but it's not. It's like watching the son of James Brown and Steve Marriott, in full flow, with his two falsetto-harmonising bandmates simulating the female backing singers that appear on their latest record.

With that, *Night Train* canters into life. The room fills with cheers.

If you're going to go old-school in 2023, *this* is how you do it.

A couple of hours earlier, we arrive at an empty club to find the band ironing out some sound-check hiccups. Cheap, unearthed adapters keep giving them little electric shocks. No one seems phased; DeWolff have been doing this since their teens (drummer/singer Luka van de Poel, Pablo's little brother, was only 12 when the band started).

"It's not like it's *extremely* dangerous at the moment," muses sound engineer/tour manager Hector, nodding towards tall, bearded keyboard player Robin Piso as he blasts a few screams out of his vintage Hammond. "But he's getting shocked, and sometimes Pablo as well."

On cue the singer/guitarist puts down his Gibson Firebird and strolls over. Next to the drum kit sits a beautiful old Marshall amp that he bought earlier on Denmark Street, its brown label still attached.

> **"When we look at pictures of our heroes, it's like 'I'm gonna get those boots!'"**
>
> **Pablo van de Poel**

"Isn't it great?!" he slurs ever so slightly through end-of-tour fatigue, Peroni in hand, grinning under a van-fresh heap of bed hair and 70s porn-star moustache. Like his bandmates, he could have wandered out of Haight-Ashbury circa 1967.

"When we look at pictures of our heroes or check out videos of them performing," he says, "it's like, 'oh, that's, that's what he's wearing, that's cool, I'm gonna get those boots!'"

For DeWolff, past style isn't so much a fashion choice as a religious persuasion. A spiritual calling. A way of life that applies to the music they play, the clothes they wear and even the cars they drive. If you sliced them they'd bleed paisley.

On stage this devotion is in everything, from the curly guitar cables to the large rug adorned with the artwork of their new album *Love, Death & In Between*. Back home their stage outfits were embroidered by Luka, using a hand-cranked 1920s sewing machine. You will not find another young rock band as deeply immersed in all things retro as they are – and certainly not one that makes it feel as much fun.

It's a by-product, perhaps, of starting out young. This gung-ho naivety that keeps them diving headfirst into harebrained schemes like making an album on cassette tape while squashed into a tour van (they literally did this for *Tascam Tapes* in 2019). Or getting fans to vote for the track-listing of their next record (this led to *Wolffpack*, a No.2 in Holland in 2021, kept off No.1 by the Foo Fighters).

"Usually we have a cool idea," Robin says through mouthfuls of pre-gig Pad Thai, "and then it turns out to be really hard-core, energy-draining… We don't think how much time and energy it will cost. And that's good, because otherwise we wouldn't do it."

"The Nonagon Marathon…" Luka says, remembering their other quarantine-era venture. "All our songs for a live stream. Nine albums, nine nights, one album every night."

"That's on a USB stick that we're selling. I'll give you one!" Robin chirps. "It's really intense, like with all these ideas we have."

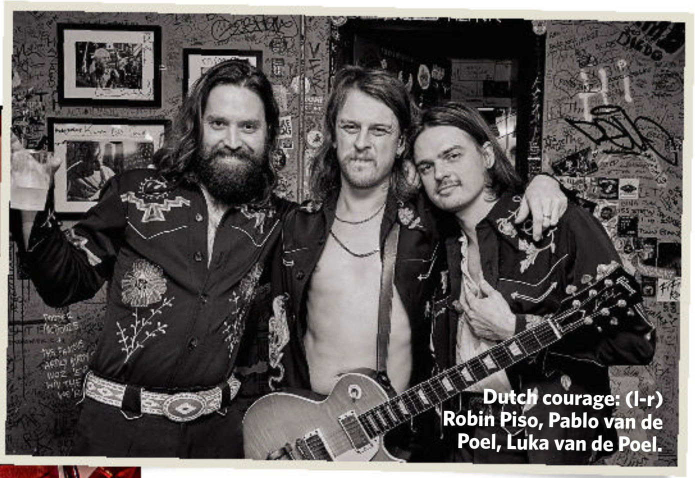
Are their loved ones as in love with the past?

"My girlfriend sells clothing from the forties, fifties, sixties," Luka says. "And Pablo's wife and Robin's girlfriend are all…" he laughs. "We all look like we're from the sixties and seventies. And it's a natural thing. We genuinely love this kind of style."

Seemingly they're not alone. Across Europe DeWolff draw large audiences of mostly 30-somethings. In the past year they've played for 10,000-strong rooms opening for Toto and The Black Crowes. On the penultimate night of the latter tour, they partied into the small hours with Crowes frontman Chris Robinson. ▷

SON HOUSE
Marshall
Marshall

DeWolff in impressive action at London's 100 Club in March.



Dutch courage: (l-r) Robin Piso, Pablo van de Poel, Luka van de Poel.

"We went to his dressing room, he invited us in," Pablo recalls. "At first it was all very 'decent', we had conversations about Steve Marriott, then more people started coming in, the volume of the music went up, people started dancing and we had this crazy party."

It wouldn't be the last time they'd hear from Robinson Snr…

On stage, Pablo scans the enthused audience approvingly. His eyes land on the seated punters to his left. "Ah, hello! The old people sitting down!" he declares in cheerfully zero-filter fashion. "Rock'n'roll was invented by your generation!"

From many this would smack of smartarsery. But Pablo's reverence, as they swerve into a rich, 70s-tastic *Yes You Do*, is totally sincere. It can be heard on all DeWolff's records, but never more so than on *Love, Death & In Between* – a sun-kissed, soulful affair that owes as much to Sam Cooke and the Staples Singers as it does to Humble Pie and Led Zeppelin.

The underlying vibe was sparked by a US trip Pablo took with his wife. Pilgrimages were made to Nashville's Music Row, Muscle Shoals in Alabama and Stax in Memphis. While staying in the latter city, they attended a service at Al Green's church. Meanwhile the frontman was absorbing the simple-pleasures ideals of John Steinbeck's classic novel *Tortilla Flat*. The experience – combined with a post-lockdown longing for collaboration – set the tone for *Love, Death & In Between*. "*Wolffpack* was recorded in quarantine," Robin adds. "And now we wanted to have as much human energy in the record as possible."

To achieve this they decamped to Kerwax studio in Brittany, France for two weeks, taking various musician friends with them. A fully analogue set-up in a converted old boarding school, it was exactly what this deeply classic-sounding ensemble project needed. Songs came together quickly, with the extra players giving the core trio space to enjoy one idea at a time, rather than frantically trying to come up with everything themselves.

"You have the horn lines, the singers," Luka says, "and so it's easier to write a more simple song, because you already have that rich sound. When we're with the three of us we tend to make songs too complicated sometimes."

"You have all this room to nerd out over your own instruments and be like: 'Okay, I can fill this up with crazy guitar things,'" Pablo offers. "And when you're with more people, there's more room to just relax. We think music should flow. Everyone grows up differently, gets to read different books, gets to hear different kinds of music. But if you get three individuals together, something unique should come out of it."

"We wanted as much human energy in the [new] record as possible."

Robin Piso

It was a busy but blissful time. A rock'n'roll summer camp of sorts. Much of this comes out on the 100 Club stage, the warmth and flow of these songs spiced with urgency. The frenzied energy of three friends who've been on the road for weeks, as they play songs designed for 10-plus players.

Like all proper power trios, there are no weak links. Pablo, a dishevelled but fiery frontman, leads a hilariously 'British' call 'n' response to *Double Crossing Man* (fresh from the *Austin Powers* school of English accents). Robin is a head-whirling dervish at the keyboards, in love with the inimitable, classic command of the Hammond organ. Luka has the voice of a lead singer, taking various lead lines as he drums, Levon Helm-style, throughout the set. You almost forget there are only three of them.

By the time they reach the encore with *Rosita* – a super-sweet, Little Feat-esque highlight of *Love, Death…*, and far more fun than most lavish 16-minute epics have any right to be – the almost-two-hour set seems to have flown by.

Post-show there's a crowd at the merch table. A tangle of hands, T-shirts and records jostle for space, while Robin and Luka sign albums and pose for photos. We find Pablo in the dressing room, his gaze falling somewhere between bliss and an athlete's exhaustion.

"That was great!" he says breathlessly, grinning, collapsing into the sofa. "It was really… *intimate*, right when we came on stage, that first second, it was like playing in a pub, in a really good way! Little things that sometimes get lost in big spaces."

With a capacity of 350, the 100 Club is small compared to venues they typically play on the continent – and especially in the Netherlands where they fill 1,000-capacity rooms. A reminder that the UK, the birthplace of so many of their heroes, is still relatively uncharted live territory.

"I love that," he says. "It keeps you on your toes. In Spain we did some big shows but we also did a cafe. It's very much the space. We just have fun."

So what's next? If the stars align, maybe a record with Chris Robinson. "We were taking a picture [with him]," Robin says, joining us, "and he was saying in my ear: 'Let's talk about how I can make your best record. You know I'm a producer, right?' And we thought, like: 'Okay, he's drunk', or 'he's just saying this because it's the end of the night'. But he came back to it a couple of days later: 'So I listened to some of your songs, and I think… we could work on something…'"

For now they're focused on returning home. Luka is buying a house in the sticks. In the past year Pablo and Robin made similar moves, marking a band exodus from the historic town of Utrecht; their base for over 10 years. Living costs have risen. A yoga space has been built above their studio. Seeing that their time there was up, they moved to new pastures.

"With the gentrification of Utrecht it was going to happen sooner or later," Pablo muses, getting up to see the fans waiting outside. "It was just a matter of time. We had to get out of there."

We sense that they won't struggle to create a new nostalgic nirvana. That whatever happens in the rest of the world, DeWolff will go wherever they must, to keep doing what they do. ●

Love, Death & In Between is out now via Mascot Label Group.

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Next month **Def Leppard** release *Drastic Symphonies*, reworked classic Leps tracks accompanied by the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. They invited us to Abbey Road Studios to watch it take shape.

Words: **Paul Elliott** Photos: **Kevin Nixon**

It doesn't happen very often with Joe Elliott, but for a brief moment, Def Leppard's singer is lost for words. He and the other four members of the band – guitarists Phil Collen and Vivian Campbell, drummer Rick Allen and bassist Rick 'Sav' Savage – are standing on hallowed ground, inside Studio 1 at Abbey Road, where The Beatles created some of their greatest music. But this is not a regular recording session for Def Leppard. They are here not to play, but to observe. They are positioned on a balcony high above the studio floor. Below, arranged in neat rows, are the musicians of the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. And as the orchestra plays the melody to one of Leppard's biggest hit songs, *Love Bites*, Joe Elliott mouths a silent 'wow'.

It is a winter day in early 2022, and Def Leppard have invited *Classic Rock* to Abbey Road to witness the creation of what Joe describes as "the most unusual record we've ever made". Its title is *Drastic Symphonies*, and as Sav says with a smile: "It is pretty drastic. It's very symphonic. And we couldn't really call it Orchestral Manoeuvres In The Dark, could we?"

Other rock bands have done this kind of thing before, most famously Deep Purple – who enlisted the Royal Philharmonic in 1969 for the *Concerto For Group And Orchestra*, for which the urbane keyboard-playing maestro Jon Lord composed an original score, performed and recorded live at the Albert Hall – and Metallica, who made two live albums with the San Francisco Symphony orchestra, *S&M* and *S&M2* (the titles were an abbreviation of *Symphony And Metallica*).

"It was never on my bucket list to do an album with an orchestra."

Joe Elliott

Joe Elliott acknowledges this, but speaks of *Drastic Symphonies* as a similarly ambitious project. "We're stepping into territory previously visited by other bands of our ilk," he says. "But we've never done anything like this before, and what's really interesting is how we've dug really deep."

The album features new versions of 16 songs with arrangements by Eric Gorfain, a classically trained violinist and composer who has worked with Jimmy Page and Robert Plant, Neil Diamond, Demi Lovato and more. Most of the tracks on *Drastic Symphonies* are based on the band's original master recordings, to which the orchestral parts are added. There are hit songs, but also deep cuts, the oldest of which date all the way back to 1981.

At the end of a long day at Abbey Road with the work done, Joe Elliott explains the method and the thinking behind this project. "It's all about expanding these songs," he says. "Most of it is stripping back our backing tracks to allow the orchestra to shine and be at the forefront, because that's the point of the record. But it's not just our greatest hits with orchestra on top – like slapping butter on a piece of toast. What we wanted to do with this album is glorify what we've done in the past as rock songs, and make them epic." ▷

Orchestral manoeuvres: (l-r) arranger Eric Gorfain, Joe Elliott, Phil Collen and producers Ronan McHugh and Nick Patrick.

Fast forward to spring 2023. A little over a year since the session at Abbey Road Studios – a year in which everyone in and around Def Leppard has kept *Drastic Symphonies* a closely guarded secret – Joe and Sav are finally free to talk in depth about the album and its creation. Both connect via Zoom from their homes – Joe in Dublin, Sav in Sheffield.

What Sav reveals first is that the idea for this album did not come from the band. "I think it was suggested by our record company," he admits. "And record companies being record companies, they just wanted our greatest hits with strings on. But once the seeds had been sown, it really started taking off in true Def Leppard style. You throw yourself into it a hundred per cent."

Joe agrees. "It was never on my bucket list to do an album with an orchestra," he says, "but this has turned out to be another of the weird things that we've done – like a show with Taylor Swift, or a duet with a country singer like Alison Krauss or Tim McGraw. It's another thing that's out of the norm for us."

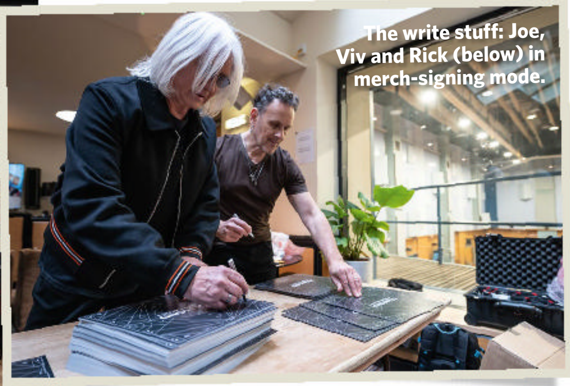
Once this project was set in motion, the first and most important process was song selection. "It was all about making sure that we had the right ones," Joe says. Some choices were no-brainers, such as the ballads *Have You Ever Needed Someone So Bad* and *When Love And Hate Collide* – the latter featured strings in its original recorded version. Other logical choices included a number of lesser known album tracks: *Gods Of War, Paper Sun, Turn To Dust, Love* and *Kings Of The World*. "These were epic songs," Joe says, "so we felt we could really go to town with orchestration because we'd orchestrated them so much originally."

"It's not just our greatest hits with orchestra on top – like slapping butter on a piece of toast."

Joe Elliott

However, in the early stages of working with Eric Gorfain, it quickly became apparent that some of the band's biggest songs – the rock anthems – would not work in this context. Gorfain first entered Def Leppard's orbit when assisting Phil Collen in the production of Tesla's 2019 album *Shock*, and working with Joe's other band Down & Outz on the album *This Is How We Roll*. "Eric used to play drums along to our stuff as a kid," Joe says. "He's a rocker who does orchestra, rather than a classical guy who's dipping his toes into rock'n'roll and doesn't really understand it. So he knew exactly what we were after, especially after working with me and Phil in the past. But when we mocked up orchestral versions of some of the big rock songs, like *Photograph* and *Rock Of Ages*, it was hideous! So we said: 'No, we're not doing it. It's got to work or it's not going on.'"

Sav explains with a shrug: "I know this may sound slightly technical to certain people, but if a song is written in a minor key, it's easier to fit string parts and be more melodic. But with *Photograph* and *Rock Of Ages*, which are very major key songs, an orchestral version just sounds a bit whimsical, even comical. A lot of it comes down to the nature of the song. We knew that we could fall down a cliff if we chose the wrong ones. And that's why this album is so cool, because we didn't just pick the hits. We picked the ones that really lent themselves to strings and all that drama. And that's why the album starts with *Turn To Dust* and *Paper Sun*, a couple of deep cuts…"



The write stuff: Joe, Viv and Rick (below) in merch-signing mode.

Phil and Sav: "Sharpie, or generic marker?"

Conductor Robert Ziegler leads the RPO though the Def Leppard catalogue.

"Quick reworking of *Being For The Benefit Of Mr Kite!*, anyone?"

The deepest of these deep cuts is *Switch 625*, the instrumental track from the 1981 album *High 'N' Dry*, written by guitarist Steve Clark, who died in 1991. It is a song that Def Leppard have continued to play over the years in tribute to Clark, and as Joe says of this new version: "It sounds like something from a James Bond movie, because it always did. It was James Bond on guitars. Now it's James Bond as we all know and love it – with strings."

Dialling down the guitars and drums was a natural part of this process, to which all parties agreed without fuss. "In this band," Joe says, "we're all man enough as individuals to say, 'You can take my shit off that track.' What we did on *Animal* was strip the drums off. And on other songs, guitars are replaced by strings. So on *Hysteria*, you've got the jangle guitar, but at the beginning of *Too Late For Love*, the guitar has been replaced by a violin."

Too Late For Love presented an odd challenge for Joe as a singer – performing a duet with himself. "Once we did the strings, the original vocal sounded a little too bombastic," he says. "So I sang a new vocal, which I recorded on this very laptop that I'm talking to you on now. For a guide, I was listening to the isolated vocal that I did with Mutt Lange at Battery studios back in 1982. It was kind of spooky." The finished version features both the original vocal and the new. "So I'm singing with my old self," Joe says. "That was weird, but in a good way."

"This is bloody Abbey Road, this is the Royal Philharmonic orchestra, and they're playing my song!"

Rick Savage

A more orthodox vocal duet is featured in a new version of *Pour Some Sugar On Me* – described by Joe as "the most radical arrangement" on the album. The other singer is Emm Gryner, a Canadian-Filipino vocalist and multi-instrumentalist who first met Joe when she was a member of David Bowie's backing band in 1999. "I went to a Bowie gig in Dublin," Joe recalls, "and it was Mark Plati, who was Bowie's bassist and co-producer, who introduced me to Emm. He said, 'You've got to meet her – she's a huge Leppard fan!' So we got talking and she said, 'I've done a jazz piano version of *Sugar*.' It was on a covers album she'd made. She did *Song 2* by Blur in a way that's barely recognisable. She even did *Crazy Train* by Ozzy on a piano! When we heard her version of *Sugar* we were all blown away. It really worked as an arrangement. So I asked her if she fancied doing her version of *Sugar* with us. And it was easy to orchestrate because of the way she did it."

For Joe, this is the most important track on *Drastic Symphonies*. "It's an absolutely brand new version," he says, "which I think is what the album needed to justify its existence more than anything else."

Joe and Sav have watched *This Is Spinal Tap* countless times. Like every rock band and every rock fan, they know the movie's dialogue by heart. Both of them laugh when ▷

Houston, 2022: Sav is singularly unimpressed with Joe's flamenco chops.

"I don't know what is about strings or piano, I always get an emotional response. It hits you in a certain way, like a full-body experience."

Rick Allen

reminded of a line delivered by Tap frontman David St. Hubbins: "I've always wanted to do a collection of my acoustic numbers with the London Philharmonic."

There is more laughter from Sav when he admits that working with musicians of such a high calibre was at times humbling. "If the whole orchestra just pissed off and left me in the empty room, I might have had a little tinkle on a piano or something," he says. "But I'm not going to do it in front of somebody that's studied for years to hone their craft. That would be like me trying to play for Argentina in the World Cup!"

But as Rick Allen said last year at Abbey Road: "I stood in that room, just hearing dry strings, not the songs. It was fucking awesome! I don't know what is about strings or piano, I always get an emotional response. It hits you in a certain way, like a full-body experience." And this was a feeling shared by all during the making of *Drastic Symphonies.*

"When you walk into Abbey Road, you feel that legacy," Joe says. "That's where the magic of the Fab Four was mostly recorded, *I Am the Walrus* and all that stuff, and so many other wonderful artists, like Pink Floyd making *The Dark Side Of The Moon*. It feels like you're standing on the shoulders of giants. And then you've got this orchestra in front of you. It's a big deal! And the most important thing is to be in the moment and enjoy it. You're watching, listening, learning. And if you walk out of there a better man, happier and more knowledgeable, then you've achieved something."

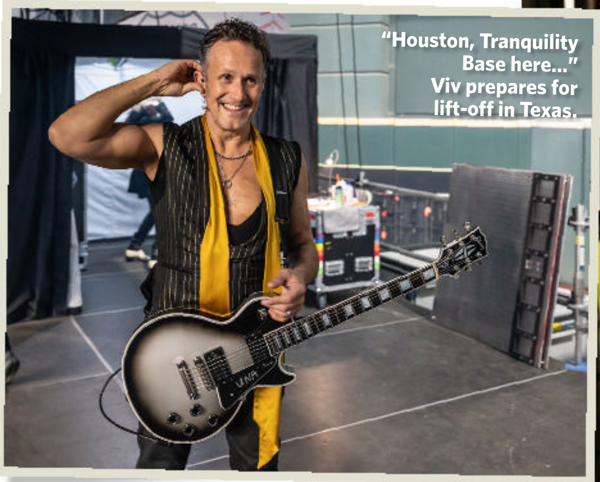
He recalls the conversations he had with members of the orchestra. "They were excited to do this because it was out of their comfort zone. Instead of playing Beethoven or Brahms or whatever, they're blasting out *Switch 625!*"

Likewise, this was a wholly new experience for the band. "We were in awe watching these guys," Joe says. "Everything sounded so perfect. I remember being down the front at an AC/DC gig at the Sheffield Top Rank in 1976. All I could hear was Angus. And I couldn't hear for three days afterwards. But with the orchestra, the balances were never out of sync – from the cellos all the way down to a little plinky triangle. You're just standing there thinking, 'These guys know what they're doing.'"

Jesus Christ pose: Phil gets swole.

He also found himself wondering how this might sound in a live performance, with band and orchestra. At Abbey Road the musicians of the Philharmonic dressed casually, one even wearing a Def Leppard T-shirt. But as Joe says now, "You start picturing them in tuxedos, at the Albert Hall, and you're imagining an audience hearing this live the first time. But we're just happy with how this record has turned out."

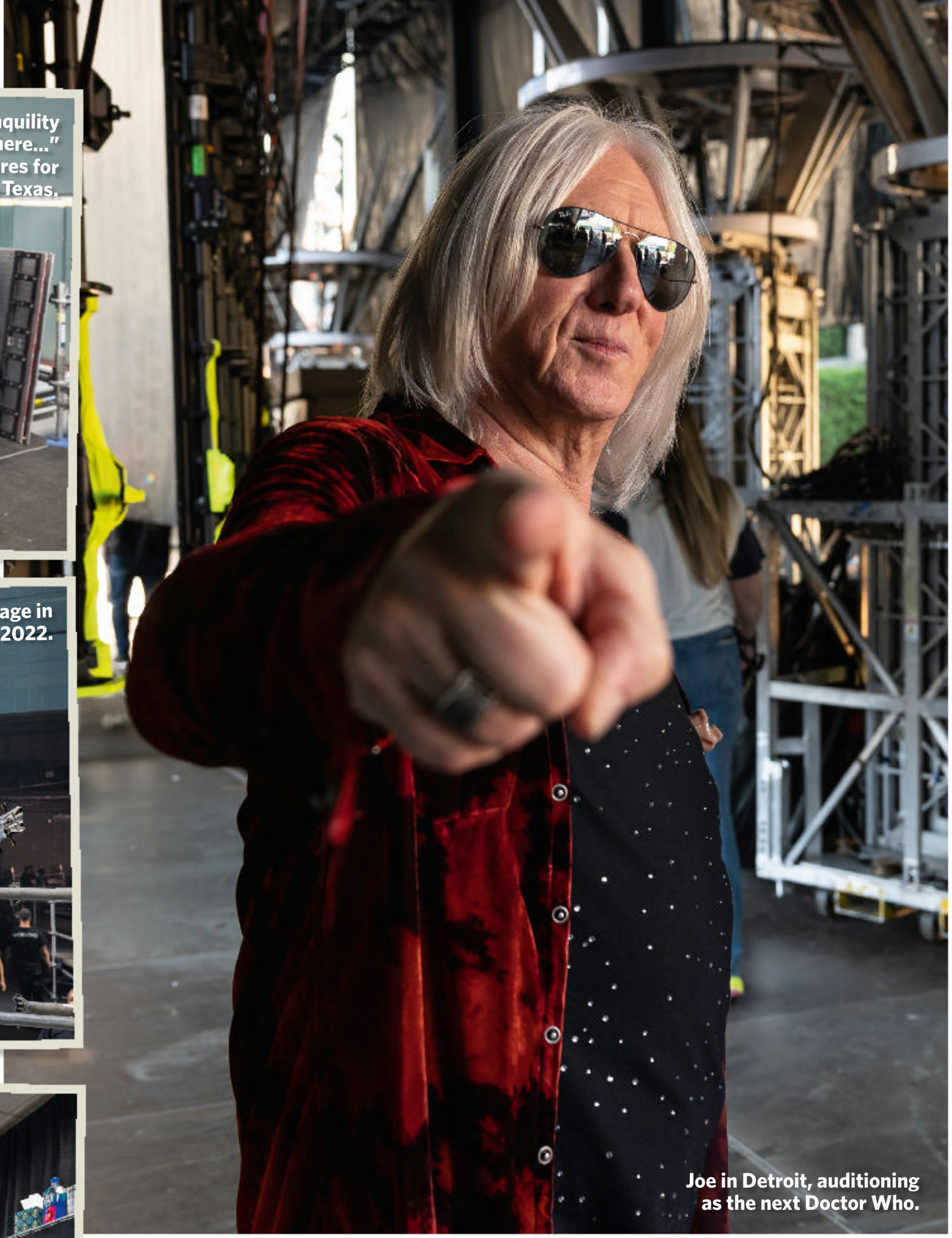
In this, he and Sav stress the importance of Eric Gorfain and another key member of the team, producer Ronan McHugh, who has worked with the band since



"Houston, Tranquility Base here..." Viv prepares for lift-off in Texas.

Sav backstage in Arlington, August 2022.

Warming up in Detroit, July 2022.



Joe in Detroit, auditioning as the next Doctor Who.

"We're stepping into territory previously visited by other bands of our ilk, but we've never done anything like this."

Joe Elliott

the late 90s, and shared duties on *Drastic Symphonies* with Nick Patrick – who produced Royal Philharmonic recordings of the music of Elvis Presley, Roy Orbison, The Beach Boys and more. "Eric really did give us that fifth dimension," Joe says. "It changed the dynamic of these songs altogether, which is absolutely what we wanted. And Ronan did such a great job. I remember being in the control room at Abbey Road and seeing the joy on the faces of him and Eric, just beaming with pride at how massive this thing sounded. But of course, the rest of the world doesn't have the luxury of a room like that to listen to it in. Some of us are just listening with earbuds all day long. So you've got to make sure that it still sounds great on whatever you've got. And that's where Roland comes into his own…"

As Sav says, "It was just a great process. Some of these songs, I think, were almost made for orchestras. It's almost as if we should have put strings on at the time. But we're a rock band, so we had to be careful about that sort of thing. Until now…"

Ultimately, a project that nobody in Def Leppard had ever considered before has, according to Joe and Sav, turned into something profound. "Certainly," Joe says, "there were times when I was listening to the orchestra playing these songs and it brought a lump to my throat."

There is one moment he recalls most clearly from the Abbey Road sessions: the recording of *Love*, the beautiful song that Sav wrote in homage to his favourite band, Queen. "In more than forty years of knowing him, I've never ever seen Sav take a photograph of anything," Joe says. "He never does that. But when he heard them playing that song, he got his phone out and filmed it. He was right in there like David fucking Attenborough! It was such a special moment for him."

Sav smiles at the memory. "I don't normally get caught up in the emotion," he says. "But in that particular moment, it just hit me. I looked around thought: this is bloody Abbey Road, this is the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, and they're playing my song! It's something I never could have dreamed of. So it was pretty emotional for me. In all these years I've been in this business, doing what we do, that was one of the greatest few minutes of my career.

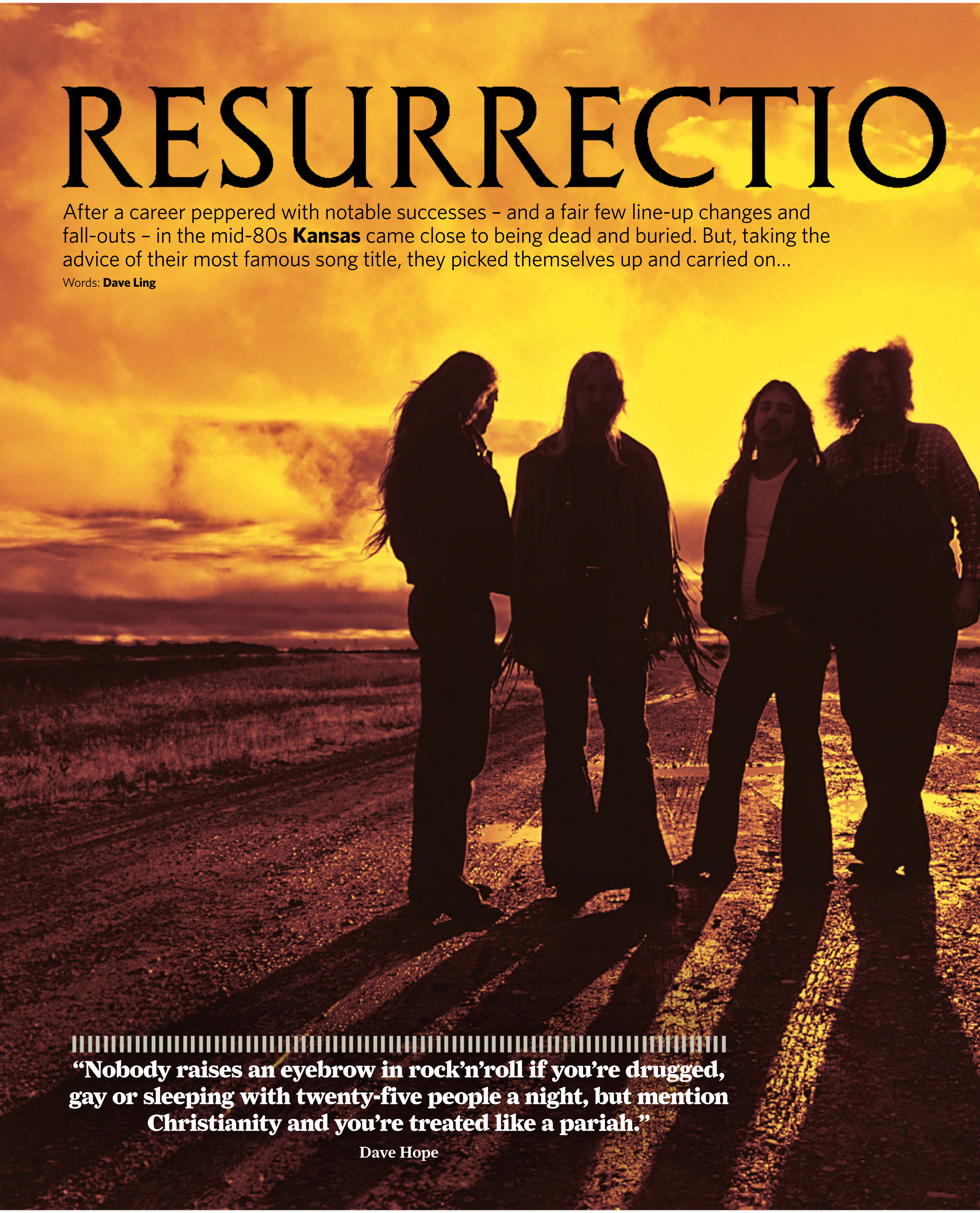
"Yeah," he says. "That's how important it was to me." ●

Drastic Symphonies is out on May 19 via Mercury. More info at defleppard.com

RESURRECTIO

After a career peppered with notable successes – and a fair few line-up changes and fall-outs – in the mid-80s **Kansas** came close to being dead and buried. But, taking the advice of their most famous song title, they picked themselves up and carried on…

Words: **Dave Ling**



"Nobody raises an eyebrow in rock'n'roll if you're drugged, gay or sleeping with twenty-five people a night, but mention Christianity and you're treated like a pariah."

Dave Hope

N DAYS

© DON HUNSTEIN SONY MUSIC 1973

From the moment they started playing music together half a century ago in Topeka, Kansas were always a square peg in a round hole. They were founded in the capital city of the state after which they were named, and their sound represented a colourful, boogie-laden twist on themes formulated by the English art-rock set, often defying those complexities with radio-friendly hooks and the violin of the classically trained Robby Steinhardt.

But while the popular AOR bands of the era dressed like peacocks, none of the members of Kansas displayed pin-up potential. Some were bulky, others skinny, some had enormous tumbleweed coiffures, and one didn't even bother changing out of his work overalls. And yet when they plugged in and played, Kansas had something truly remarkable.

Mountains of drugs, rampant egos and rock'n'roll excess were not what derailed Kansas. Their classic line-up was torn apart by religion. At the height of the group's success, guitarist and chief songwriter Kerry Livgren broke away to form the Christian rock band A.D. along with bassist Dave Hope, who later became a fully ordained Anglican minister.

And yet barring a miniscule break during the mid-1980s Kansas sailed onwards, notching eight gold and three six-times-platinum albums (*Leftoverture, Point Of Know Return* and *The Best Of Kansas*), and the million-selling double live album *Two For The Show*.

Featuring the talents of some 24 different members, Kansas have carved out a 50-year career. Here we present that remarkable story, told in their own words (see over the page for the cast list).

Phil Ehart: Four of us had gone to high school together, but from the very beginning, three things made Kansas unique: the songs written by Kerry [Livgren], the vocals of Steve Walsh, and Robby Steinhardt's violin.

Kerry Livgren: Located in Topeka, we were isolated from both coasts, stuck in the middle of the United States, and somehow found ourselves making this incredible music. We had no idea where it came from.

Rich Williams: We had begun in different bands, playing bars and high-school proms before leaving our teens behind and starting to write our own material. What kept the original six guys together was the desire of a career in music. None of us wanted to get a real job. We were following the likes of Yes, King Crimson and those bands that were throwing the rule book away. Singing about cars and girls was not for us. But as far as goals were concerned, we dreamt of nothing more than writing and recording an album.

Ehart: There was no master plan for success, and if Don Kirshner [the entrepreneur behind The Monkees and other acts] had not discovered us via the demo tape that we sent him, I'm certain we would not be having this conversation.

Livgren: Don Kirshner had a record label that was distributed by CBS. He wanted to bring us to New York City to work at the famous Record Plant, ▷

THE CAST

Phil Ehart
Drummer and co-founder, still with the band.

Rich Williams
Guitarist and co-founder, still with the band.

Billy Greer
Bassist, 1985 to the present.

Ronnie Platt
Singer, 2014 to present.

Kerry Livgren
Guitarist, keyboard player and songwriter. Original member, served 1970–1972, 1973–1983, 1990–1991 and 1999–2000.

Steve Walsh
Singer and co-founder, 1973–1981 and 1985–2014.

Dave Hope
Bassist and co-founder, 1970–1971, 1973–1983 and 1990.

Steve Morse
Guitarist, 1985 to 1991.

which was about as good as it could get for a young band like us. Beers flowed that night, and everything flowed. It was the beginning of a lifelong dream.

Ehart: Suddenly we were on tour in arenas with bands like Queen, the Eagles and The Kinks.

Livgren: One of the gigs with The Kinks, which took place in Arizona, was on a revolving stage. Rich Williams was disorientated and stepped off into the audience. We got to the dressing room, but Rich was still walking around in the crowd holding his guitar, with the house lights up.

Nobody knew it yet, but Kansas' deal with Kirshner (who died in 2011) was heavily weighted in the latter's favour. "Signing the contract without reading it, we sold our souls," Williams sighs. "It wasn't till our fifth album that we could renegotiate. Until then we received a measly twenty-five cents a record, split eight ways with our management."

Kansas's self-titled debut album, released in 1974, sold a credible 100,000 copies but reached only No.174 in the US chart. The following year's *Song For America* did much better, reaching No.57. However, fortunes regressed when *Masque* (also '74) stalled at No.70.

All that changed in 1976. Buoyed by the success of its smash hit single *Carry On Wayward Son*, fourth album *Leftoverture* rocketed Kansas into the superstar bracket, and became the true masterpiece of their catalogue. With Steve Walsh suffering from writer's block, the album also pushed Livgren into the role of chief songwriter.

It was Livgren who wrote *Wayward Son*, although, like so many fortuitous events in rock history, he almost did it too late.

Livgren: Back then I wrote maybe seventy per cent of each album, with Steve supplying the rest, and on the very first day of rehearsals Steve said that he had nothing – not a single song. I don't relish that kind of pressure, but with hindsight it really brought out the best in me.

Ehart: We were packing up our stuff when Kerry walked in with his last-minute addition. For such a very, very special song, it barely made the record.

Livgren: I said: "Guys, maybe you should listen to this." Eyebrows were raised and, of course, it changed everything for Kansas. It's an autobiographical song. I've always been on a spiritual sojourn, looking for truth and meaning. It was a song of self-encouragement; I was telling myself to keep on looking and I would find what I sought.

For their next album, 1977's *Point Of Know Return* (which actually peaked a place higher than its predecessor), Steve Walsh was relieved to rediscover his mojo, although it was Livgren who wrote another signature hit, the fragile ballad *Dust In The Wind*. By the time *Leftoverture* went gold (half a million copies) the band had repaid their debt to Kirshner Records for recording and touring. But now, with royalties going to the songwriters, one guy was cashing in. And behind the scenes, jealousy began to brew.

Williams: The song that had got our record deal with Don Kirshner, *Can I Tell You*, was written by the five of us – without Kerry. When Kerry joined, we *wanted* his songwriting. It was important to us. With the first few albums we were like pirates out on the open sea; it was all for one and one for all. But money changes everything. The scales between the haves and the have nots began to tip.

Livgren: Suddenly we started to make some money, and we were all caught up in the excitement that it brought. I was still so naïve, it didn't even occur to me that Steve might resent the success we received for an album he hadn't written anything for.

Ehart: Kerry was just so prolific at that time, everyone just kept out of his way. We accepted everything he brought us because it was all so great. But yeah, lots of money was now coming in. People were saying how great we were, and some of us started to believe those things.

Williams: When the writers started receiving these huge cheques it became difficult for a bunch of young men full of piss and vinegar. All of us were working our butts off, so it was hard to accept. Some guys were buying cars, boats and houses, and I was still living in my Mom's basement. The other regrettable side was that certain people started saying they didn't want to work as hard or travel as much.

At around the same time, Livgren's songs of 'self-encouragement' were developing into something more theology-based. Walsh resigned during the recording of *Point Of*

GETTY x2

"We were following the likes of King Crimson, Yes... Singing about cars and girls was not for us."
Rich Williams

From left: Robby Steinhardt, Steve Walsh, Rich Williams and Kerry Livgren with Kansas in 1977.

Know Return, only to be talked around. Bassist Dave Hope found his solace in pharmaceuticals.

As the 70s ended, the sixth Kansas album, *Monolith,* didn't fully reflect the depth of their inner turbulence. On tour, Livgren became a born-again Christian. Later on, Hope followed suit.

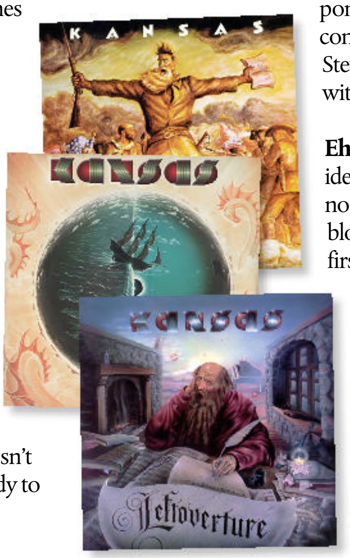
Ehart: There was a lot of unhappiness and stress behind the scenes. Kerry and Dave were off in their own little corner, others took drugs. It definitely wasn't a fun band to be in at that time.

Livgren: When you're in your early twenties and suddenly become famous, women literally chase after you, and it's almost impossible not to give in to temptation. What began to change us was success. It was all very satisfying, but it also left an inner void. When your dream comes true, where do you go from there?

"What began to change us was success. It was all very satisfying, but it also left an inner void."

Kerry Livgren

Dave Hope: My 'born again' experience was huge. We were between Chicago and St Louis when I felt the presence of God come down onto me. I wasn't seeking anything, it just happened, and I couldn't deny it. I was filled with an incredible love that dissolved my heart. I knew immediately that it was God because I'd never felt such tenderness before. I'd been up all of the night before snorting coke and drinking, so I knew it wasn't a drug high. I didn't expect anybody to understand. Nobody raises an eyebrow in rock'n'roll circles if you're drugged out of your mind, gay or sleeping with twenty-five people a night, but mention Christianity and you're treated like a pariah.



Ehart: The band comprised a Catholic, a Baptist, a part-Jew, an agnostic and an atheist. Kerry's religion was fine, but he wanted to make Kansas a sounding board for his beliefs. That sort of pontificating just didn't sit comfortably with us, especially Steve, who had to sing the songs with conviction.

Ehart: Steve wasn't crazy about the idea of quitting, but Kerry left him no choice. It was close to a mortal blow for us to suffer, him being the first domino to have fallen.

Kansas's disappointing album *Audio-Visions,* in 1980, would be the last with Steve Walsh for six years. Having tested the waters via his solo album *Schemer-Dreamer* (recorded with various Kansas alumni and a guitarist named Steve Morse, more of whom later), the singer left and formed Streets.

It's been claimed that Sammy Hagar, future King's X frontman Doug Pinnick and Jim Stafford (famous for the song *Spiders & Snakes*) were among those that auditioned to join Kansas, but in the end the band went with younger, untried blood in the form of Los Angeles native John Elefante. Another devout Christian, Elefante fronted Kansas for two albums: *Vinyl Confessions* and *Drastic Measures.* With Livgren relinquishing control, the band's sound grew slicker and more AOR-based.

John Elefante: Prior to Kansas I was a complete unknown. Man, I was scared. Now I was filling the shoes of one of the greatest rock singers ever.

Livgren: Material-wise, *Vinyl Confessions* was fairly strong, but we weren't sure who we wanted to be. With hindsight, John Elefante was very inexperienced, and in the endless search for the next single we departed more and more from what Kansas was originally about.

Elefante: The mystique of faceless bands was ending. Videos were becoming popular, and after we had a hit with my song *Fight Fire With Fire,* the record company pressurised us for those. ▷

GETTY x2

Making a racket in '77: (l-r) Robby Steinhardt, Steve Walsh, Kerry Livgren, Rich Williams, Dave Hope, Phil Ehart.

"Some guys were buying cars, boats and houses. I was still living in my Mom's basement."

Rich Williams

And with Kerry spending more time away from the band, I started to feel like I had been left holding the baby. That really bummed me out, because I wanted to write with him. When Kerry took his songs away, a big part of the band left with him.

Ehart: We'd been trying for ages to persuade Robby [Steinhardt] to clean up. We told him that he needed to go away for a while. We didn't see him again for sixteen years.

Livgren: The violin was gone, so was Steve [Walsh], I wasn't even sure what Kansas was any more. I withdrew from the group.

Kerry Livgren and bassist Dave Hope left the band on New Year's Eve 1983, and Elefante was out of the door not too far behind them. And although Kansas never officially split up, they effectively ground to a halt the following summer.

Hope: People were still offering me drugs, and girls were asking where the party was. I couldn't be an alcoholic and work in a liquor store. Nobody's that strong. I had a kid on the way and wanted to remain faithful to my wife.

Elefante: There were only three members left – myself, Rich and Phil. Dave had left, so had Kerry. There would have been more money had I stayed, but at the time it didn't matter. I wanted to see what I could do on my own.

Livgren: Kansas had ceased to be an actual band and was two or three corporations instead. Because I wrote the songs, when I quit it was like trying to leave the army. It got very ugly.

Ehart: We didn't even consider trying to replace Kerry and Dave. Elefante was also moving on, that left just myself and Rich. All the same, I still believed that there was life left in Kansas. Looking back, we needed that break.

Williams: It's like being a baseball player. One year you're at your peak, the next you're going down the shitter. The best thing was that Phil and I realised change is always going to come, it can be brutal, but if you're smart you plan ahead for it.

In fact it was a stroke of fortune that resurrected Kansas. Ehart had begun planning a reunion when he ran into Steve Morse of Dixie Dregs at a Robert Plant & The Honeydrippers concert. An exceptional guitarist, Morse had been voted best guitarist in the world

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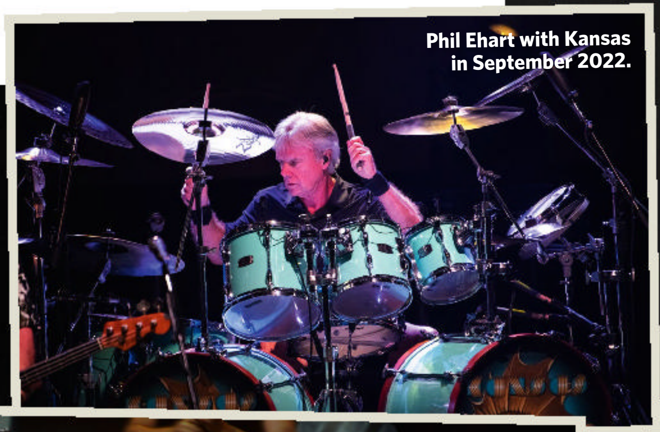

Phil Ehart with Kansas in September 2022.

Still carrying on: Kansas at Comic-Con International in 2017.

Steve Morse (left) and John Elefante.

Ronnie Platt with the band in 2015.

"Suddenly we were in arenas with bands like Queen, the Eagles and The Kinks."

Phil Ehart

by the readers of *Guitar Player* for five consecutive years (1982-86).

Along with a returning Steve Walsh, the arrival into Kansas of Morse and new bassist Billy Greer regenerated the band over two albums: 1986's *Power* and 1988's Bob Ezrin-produced *In The Spirit Of Things*.

Ehart: Steve [Morse] walked up to me during the gig's intermission and said he wanted to audition for Kansas. I said there was no need to audition.

Steve Morse: I was a huge Kansas fan, and Steve Walsh had actually sung on a Dixie Dregs album, though he'd asked for anonymity. Believe me, nothing is more anonymous than appearing on a Dregs album!

Ehart: Stylistically, Steve's joining was a big departure, but it was great from day one. We were shifting direction and gears, and every night we could still play *Carry On Wayward Son* and *Dust In The Wind*. And of course having Steve along brought us a lot of credibility.

Billy Greer: I remember going into the offices of MCA Records one day and everybody was far more interested in what Tiffany [who had five minutes of fame with her hit single *I Think We're Alone Now*] was doing. The guys that signed us had long-since left the company.

Morse: I came from a group where I had almost total musical control, and MCA were making us record ballads. It was a tough call, because things like *Musicatto* [a progressive-flavoured instrumental from *Power*] were how I thought Kansas should've gone. I really enjoyed my time in Kansas, but eventually it had to come to an end. Fortunately, we had met as friends and we parted the same way.

The next Kansas album, *Freaks Of Nature*, which added violinist David Ragsdale, was released in 1995 via the small independent label Intersound. Amid the grunge explosion the record went almost unnoticed. But better times were ahead, and in '97 Steinhardt re-joined the band. At the turn of the millennium, following a 17-year absence, Kerry Livgren also returned to Kansas – albeit temporarily. Livgren wrote all the material for 2000's *Somewhere To Elsewhere*, on which Dave Hope doubled up on the bass alongside Greer.

Asked by *Classic Rock* about the possibility of him re-joining Kansas on a permanent basis, Livgren hedged: "I've learned not to answer that question. However you reply, you open a whole can of worms."

And so the line-up featuring Walsh, Williams, Ehart, Greer and Ragsdale (who took over from Steinhardt in 2006) rolled onwards on the 'greatest hits' circuit. However, Steve Walsh's voice was fading, and in 2014 he reached crisis point.

Ehart: It was difficult hearing one of the best singers in rock music losing his voice, his range and his confidence. But I was determined not to fire Steve, so we hung in there. We had a European tour coming up, and because I knew he wouldn't be able to sing a lot of the more difficult songs, I crossed them from the set-list. He asked why, and when I explained, there ▷

GETTY x4

Kansas in 2019: David Ragsdale, Phil Ehart, Ronnie Platt, Richard Williams, Tom Brislin, Billy Greer.

was a long pause and Steve said: 'I will send you my resignation today'. And so he graciously stepped down.

Williams: Until that point we had been taking a slow circle down the drain. But this was Steve Walsh. The idea [of his retirement] had to come from him.

Steve Walsh (in his resignation statement): Sometimes I had to pinch myself just to make sure I wasn't dreaming that at my age [63 years old] I was still playing in a great band in front of great fans. Let me just say that it's time for me to go, and yes, it makes me sad to have to admit that.

Elefante: After Steve left for the final time, we had a great meeting about me going back. Things went well, and it was great to give everybody a hug again. I don't really know why it didn't happen… it just didn't.

Instead, Kansas brought in former Shooting Star singer Ronnie Platt. Over the course of two ecstatically received studio albums, *The Prelude Implicit* and *The Absence Of Presence*, this appointment – along with the integration of guitarist Zak Rizvi and more latterly former Meat Loaf and Yes keyboard player Tom Brislin – has allowed Kansas not just to survive but also to reinvent themselves.

Ronnie Platt: A friend had told me about the announcement of Steve's retirement. On a total whim I contacted Rich Williams via Facebook, who remembered me from Shooting Star when our bands had played together. This was on a Wednesday, and less than a week later I had joined Kansas. Kansas has such an amazing library of music that I didn't know that the job would involve writing songs, or that they would be making more studio records. So I had won the lottery once, now I was winning it a second time.

Ehart: Without the songwriting of Kerry or Steve Walsh, we had resigned ourselves, reluctantly, to being a so-called 'heritage band'. Now with Zak and Ronnie we could do it all again. To me, *The Absence Of Presence* is one of the best albums this band has ever made. Zak decided to leave [in 2021], but it's okay, we'll find a way around that problem.

> **"Kerry's religion was fine, but he wanted to make Kansas a sounding board for his beliefs."**
> **Phil Ehart**

Williams: Phil and I have been doing this for a long time now and we've learned how to cultivate talent. We did it with Ronnie, Zak and Tom, and we'll do it again with whoever replaces Zak. It's about taking the next logical step for Kansas.

Ehart: We're happy and grateful that *Carry On Wayward Son* was adopted by [cartoon series] *South Park* and has appeared in so many movie soundtracks [including *The Legend Of Ron Burgundy*, *Family Guy* and *Happy Gilmore*]. We laugh at ourselves just as much as any other band might, but we always ensure that those references are never derogatory.

Platt: During my eight and a half years with the band, the resurgence in popularity has been incredible. It's great to see the original fans coming to see us again, knowing there's new blood. But now they bring their children and, dare I say it, their grandchildren.

Williams: A fiftieth-anniversary tour takes place this year throughout America, and I can tell you that Kansas are going to record again. We've started piecing together a new album, which should hopefully come out by the end of 2024. We're in communication with Kerry [Livgren], Dave [Hope] and Steve [Morse], it's always friendly. Kerry caught covid a few months back but he's fine now. After the stroke [in 2009], which affects his picking hand, he still can't play guitar the way he once could, but he's writing music. And for this fiftieth-anniversary tour Kerry is welcome to come out and play a song with us. It's the same for John Elefante and the rest… the more the merrier. If Kerry wants to submit a song for the next Kansas album, he's very welcome. The doors are open, they're not closed. We've done the first fifty years, let's start something new.

Another Fork In The Road – 50 Years Of Kansas is available via Inside Out Music. Some of the quotes in this feature first appeared in a Kansas story in Classic Rock in 2005.

EMILY BUTLER/PRESS

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DREW ELLIOT/PRESS

From the woods of West Virginia to the north of England (via Denmark, Leicester, Nashville, the Middle East…), our selection of the best new rock draws from far and wide this month – curated, as ever, from the considerable volume of new music that reaches our ears every day. In these pages you'll find catchy curveballs from familiar names, 21st-century glam, southern rock, blues, grunge, and plain ol' riff-tastic bangers that never get old.

Full disclosure: right now, a lot of things aren't easy for bands like these: touring logistics in a post-Covid/post-Brexit world; the prospect of soaring costs for US tours (as we went to press the Department Of Homeland Security was proposing to increase artist visa fees by 260%, threatening all but the Rolling Stones and Ed Sheerans of this world); the uncertain future of UK grass-roots venues, still under the threat of raised rents.

Yet there are things that somehow out-muscle all that. Real success stories (Hot List-featured Those Damn Crows hit a very tidy No.3 in the UK album chart last month). Proactive steps for our beloved live hotspots (check out the work of the Music Venue Trust, who have become key movers in this regard). Genuinely excellent new sounds that continue to flow from rock's tributaries, of which these eight tracks represent one eclectic slice.

Not everyone likes rock'n'roll. Too loud, they might say. Too abrasive. Too indebted to the past. But for those of us who *do* favour this stuff, it's something we really love, and that makes it special.

More where this came from every week at loudersound.com

Starbenders
The Game

If Stevie Nicks and Ghost mastermind Tobias Forge had a kid, and raised it on a mixture of 70s classic rock and Cyndi Lauper records, it would have been Kimi Shelter – specifically, Kimi Shelter on this game-raising new single from her Atlanta-based troupe of bohemian glamsters. A singer/guitarist with a classical background and rock'n'roll in her bones, Shelter is the charismatic focal point on this marriage of minor-key swagger, 70s meat and 80s glitter.
starbenders.com

Black Spiders
Hot Wheels

They're back! "It's a party album from top to tail, every one a banger," the Spiders say of their brilliantly titled next record (it's hard to dislike a band with the humour and audacity to name their album *Can't Die, Won't Die*), from which this oomphy, bottom-heavy riff cake is taken.

"As usual, there is something for everyone and maybe some surprises. We went all-out, balls-out on this record. Each track is an ear worm. Never has a title been more apt!"

Well, based on this first taste the omens are certainly good. There's nothing complicated about *Hot Wheels*. Nothing that doesn't soothe the rock-hungry soul and generally put you in A Good Place. It doesn't 'grow on you', it's just there.
blackspidersband.com

Austin Gold *Cut And Run*

Peterborough's Austin Gold have weathered a pandemic and multiple line-up changes (one of those bands that consistently puts out really strong tunes and, probably unfairly, often gets overlooked), and come out fighting, as *Cut And Run* proves once again. Taken from last year's *Those City Lights* album, it's an emotive banger that rocks and sparkles. "It's a tale urging a companion to stick it to the man and head off in a cloud of tyre smoke," says frontman David James Smith. "Hear the lyrics, *'Take your chances, cut and run'* and you can get a sense of its urgency. It's a theme that can be found throughout the album."
austingold.co.uk

Chris Shiflett *Black Top White Lines*

The Foos guitarist's rollicking, cowboy boot-stomping solo single was co-written with Jaren Johnston (The Cadillac Three) and John Osborne (Brothers Osborne). Fans of the latter two's work won't struggle to hear their influence on *Black Top White Lines*, a low-slung, Nashville-fried rocker with groove in its heart and dirt under its fingernails. Billed as "a dark tale of justice that moves quickly into the fast lane with no intention of slowing down", it draws out the country twang in Shiflett's voice – a few US states away from his punk roots, without throwing those out altogether.
chrisshiflettmusic.com

AUSTIN GOLD: DARAL BRENNAN/PRESS; BLACK SPIDERS: JAMIE BUBB/PRESS

The Cadillac Three

Hillbilly ft. Elvie Shane, Ketch Secor

TC3 have always excelled in the cracks between genres (rock, country, metal, funk, grunge…); sonic and cultural intersections where juicy hybrids thrive, and have led this Nashvillest of Nashville trios to their signature country-fuzz vibe. Lyrics about partying with girls and crackin' cold ones with the boys (we're not even speaking figuratively there; they actually have a song called *Crackin' Cold Ones With The Boys*) have flowed.

So it's interesting to find them on introspective form for this, their first new song in two years. Don't get us wrong, *Hillbilly* still rocks, beyond a doubt, but it's shot through with haunting, bluegrass-y fiddle strains and tales of substance abuse in small rural towns.

thecadillacthree.com

The Karman Line

King Of The Day

A multinational line-up based in the UAE, The Karman Line are decidedly British and classic in their influences (Led Zeppelin, Deep Purple… all the good stuff), which are writ large on this new single – together with a funked up layer of 90s hard-rock. Almost like the Red Hot Chili Peppers or Extreme moonlighting as a bluesy 70s band. There's more to come on their debut album *Like A Machine*, which is out on May 5. "We're all super excited it's finally going out into the world," the band say, "and even more excited to take it on the road."

linktr.eekarmanlinetheband

THE CADILLAC THREE: LUKE HUTCHERSON/PRESS

Gyasi *Baby Blue*

Raised on a farm in rural West Virginia and now based in Nashville, Gyasi (his real name) worships at the altars of Bolan and Bowie in the best way possible. Featuring Jack White band members and riff-loads of dirty 70s glitter, *Baby Blue* shares so much DNA with T.Rex's *20th Century Boy* (the voice, the threads, the glammed up blues chords) that they could have been separated at birth. It rocks like a monster, too, without taking itself too seriously (*'Got a rock'n'roll heart and babe you eat it with a spoon… what a loon'*). It's sassy, stompy glam-rock fun, dripping in sequins and colourful eyeshadow.
gyasimusic.com

Ashes Of Billy *Shamed*

We did not see it coming with these young Danish rockers (and when we say young, we mean *young*; as in, they're all still in their mid-teens). Brimming with promise, much of it already fulfilled on their new EP *The Right Place*, they won us over with the smoky, Stone Temple Pilots-y swagger of taster single *Shamed*. Mastered by Metallica engineer Flemming Rasmussen, it finds them planting their feet with startling maturity in heavy grunge soil – with one eye on the punk that's also in their DNA, and the other on the present. All that, and they're not even old enough to drive a car. Ones to watch out for.
facebook.com/ashesofbilly

And keep an ear out for... Tigercub

There's something in the water in Brighton. That in itself is hardly a new thing, but lately the seaside city's rock scene seems to have hit an oomphy new peak. Along with the likes of Royal Blood, Demob Happy and Kid Kapichi, power trio Tigercub are among those making particularly appealing noises. And like those other bands they keep one foot in the rock zone and the other under disco lights. Accordingly, their latest single *Play My Favourite Song* is a proper floor-filler. Hinged on thick, fuzzy bass grooves and psychedelic wooze, it combines thumping verses with a super-sized chorus, all of it building to a stylish, slightly menacing mix that makes a commanding first impression of upcoming album *The Perfume Of Decay* (out June 2 via Pearl Jam man Stone Gossard's label Loosegroove).
tigercubtigercub.com

GYASI: CHAD CRAWFORD/PRESS; TIGERCUB: ANDREIA LEMOS/PRESS

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DANGER DANGER - 'SCREW IT!'

FEMME FATALE 'S/T'

BANG TANGO - 'PSYCHO CAFÉ'

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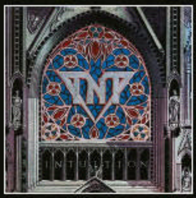
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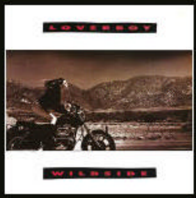
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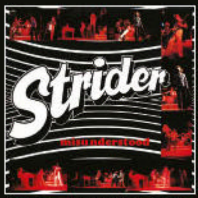
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- KANSAS - WHY THE WAYWARD SONS ARE STILL CARRYING ON!
- BAD ENGLISH - JOHN WAITE ON THE RISE AND FALL OF THE JOURNEY/BABYS SUPERGROUP
- ALDO NOVA - HE SWEARS HE'LL BE BIG AGAIN
- WINGER - "I'M REALLY FORTUNATE."
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P84

Pink Floyd

The Dark Side Of The Moon comes into the light again, for its 50th anniversary

THE HARD STUFF

The Ultimate ROCK REVIEWS Section

14 PAGES

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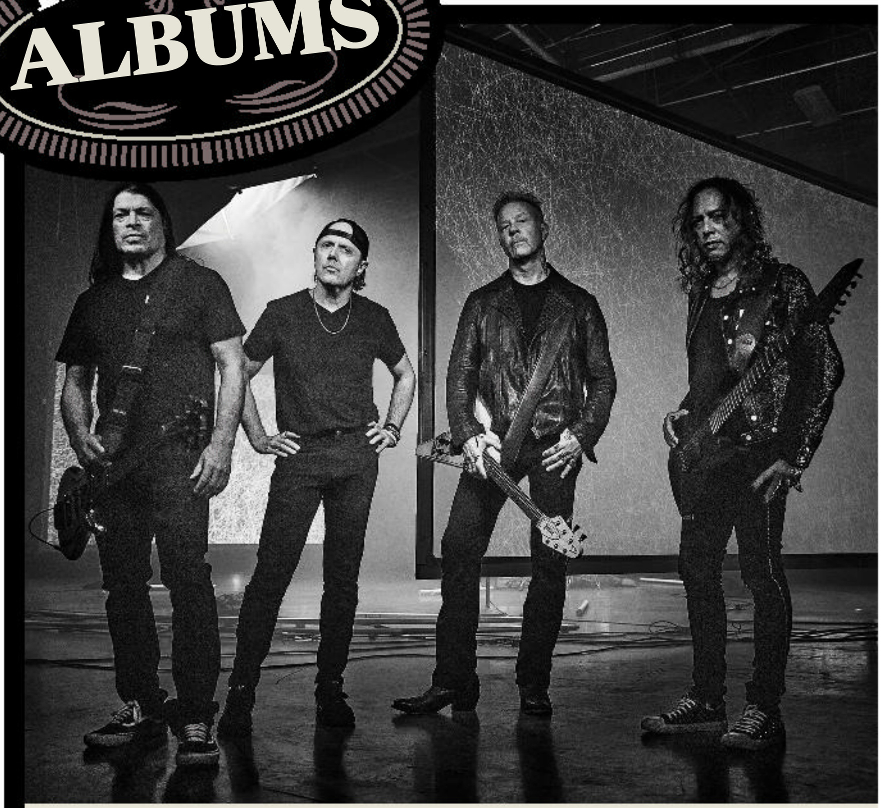


Metallica

72 Seasons *BLACKENED RECORDINGS*

Musical intensity meets personal tumult on 2023's most anticipated metal album.

The release of a new Metallica album is a huge event these days. With it comes anticipation and expectation from a demanding fanbase, some of whom perversely seem to relish the possibility of being disappointed.

The 11th studio album won't disappoint anyone but the most truculent fan. *72 Seasons* follows the road map drawn up by 2008's knotty *Death Magnetic* and 2016's *Hardwired…*: titanium-plated modern metal fuelled by a relentless intent to be better, louder and sharper than anyone else.

Stellar lead single *Lux Aeterna* was greeted like a long-lost son by the faithful. With its turbo-charged, old school thrash feel and NWOBHM-referencing lyrics (*'Lightning the nation'* indeed), it felt like a deliberate callback to the band's 1983 debut *Kill 'Em All*, suggesting *72 Seasons* could find Metallica on a nostalgia trip through their own past.

In reality, it's anything but. *72 Seasons* is way denser than *Lux Aeterna* indicated. It's an intense album, one that goes hard for virtually every second of its 77-minute running time. The jagged opening title track floors the accelerator from the off, James Hetfield machine-gunning out terse, vivid lyrics: *'Wrath of man/Leaching through/Split in two.'* The furious *Shadows Follow* and *Screaming Suicide* belie the band's years (Hetfield and drummer Lars Ulrich turn 60 this year; guitarist Kirk Hammett has already passed that milestone), while *You Must Burn* arrives like a juggernaut, riding in on a hulking groove that sounds like a bulked-out *Sad But True*.

That intensity is deepened by Hetfield's lyrics. The singer has had his share of personal turbulence lately and he's uncorked a bottle of turmoil here. His lyrics, never exactly happy, are tormented and bleak. *'So tight/This crown of barbed wire,'* he snarls on *Crown Of Barbed Wire*.

72 Seasons isn't an easy listen; it demands work. Ballads are absent and even big melodies are scarce, though that ensures they're all the more striking when they do arrive. Jamming the slow-burning, 11-minute *Inamorata* on the end of an album that's already passed the 60-minute is the work of a band seeing how far they can push things. Quite far, it turns out – *Inamorata* is one of the best songs on the album (it also ends with a much-needed chink of light lyrically).

The days of Metallica raising the bar with every new release are long gone. That's someone else's job these days. Metallica's only concern is making the best Metallica album possible irrespective of what's going on around them. On that score, *72 Seasons* is a ringing success.

Dave Everley

John Cale

Mercy *DOUBLE SIX*

17th solo album for ex-VU man.

Some artists are happy to sit in the shadow of their past, pointing at the wall and going, "That was me, that was." Others keep moving on even when it is neither popular nor profitable, making music that sometimes resembles their previous efforts but mostly doesn't. One such is John Cale, whose solo career has massively outlasted his time as a member of The Velvet Underground, and has been enormously varied and frequently brilliant, encompassing everything from short, sharp rock songs to orchestral pop. And now, in 2023, here is Cale's 17th album, *Mercy*, which breaks with previous methods by being filled with collaborations. And while everyone from Weyes Blood to Fat White Family and from Tony Allen to Panda Bear is here, nobody is allowed to dominate the sound of the album, which is haunting and imperial at the same time, as if it can't decide whether or not to sound moody and ambient or like a Roman Emperor announcing some wars, and in the end settles for both. With one nod to the past in *Moonstruck (Nico's Song)*, *Mercy* is the sound of a man who's always lived in the future.

David Quantick

Stöner

Boogie To Baja *HEAVY PSYCH SOUNDS*

Desert rock legends half-baked as they run out of puff.

Stöner may reunite desert rock pioneers Nick Oliveri and Brant Bjork, but also serve as a cautionary tale for expecting greatness based purely on pedigree. Between the fuzzed-up blues of *Stoners Rule* and the hypnotic grooves of *Totally…*, the band found a comfortable spot that, while placid, still delivered 70s-style good-times.

Boogie To Baja shows little of that. Of its five tracks, only two feel like more than half-baked clichés – *Night Tripper Vs No Brainer* and the title-track both delivering the ethereal jams that made the desert rock scene so beloved. These are counteracted by uninspired instrumentals elsewhere; the *City Kids* cover (likely meant as a salute to Motörhead) is somehow more lethargic than even the Pink Fairies' original, while the befuddled instrumental opener plays out like a Cheech and Chong skit, forgetting that the other iconic stoner pair at least had *Earache My Eye* to showcase their prowess.

Rich Hobson

Last In Line

Jericho *EARMUSIC*

Former Dio cohorts strive to bring the walls down.

Formed around the Dio/*Holy Diver* axis of Vivian Campbell, Vinnie Appice and the now sadly departed Jimmy Bain, Last In Line could easily have been one of those self-indulgent all-star bands that trade on reputation alone. Instead, their first two albums were genuinely great, noisily split the difference between hard rock and heavy metal, and saluted their former boss with a virtuoso flourish. Six years on from second album *Jericho* feels looser and grittier than either of its predecessors, with singer Andrew Freeman audibly upping his game. Dominated by hard-hitting rockers like breathless opener *Not Today Satan* and *Ghost Town*, *Jericho* also has room for the hazy fumes of psychedelia, in both Freeman's harmonised vocals *and* an occasional but strong resemblance to prime King's X. The doom-meets-AOR sprawl of *Bastard Son* and the neck-threatening hurtle of *Hurricane Orlaugh* are the obvious standouts, but class runs through this like a stick of (unusually thunderous) rock.

Dom Lawson

Rick Wakeman

A Gallery Of The Imagination *MADFISH*

Music for an exhibition.

As a true prog rocker Rick Wakeman is acutely aware of the visual presentation of his music, whether that's his glittering cape or a bunch of ice skaters dancing around to one of his concept albums.

In his dotage he's turned the tables. The music on his latest album is aimed at challenging listeners to actively create their own impressions through

TIM SACCENTI/PRESS

painting, sculpting, dancing or whatever. But the tracks are not a succession of ambient scene setting. Wakeman has conjured up a variety of moods and styles, from the festive *Cuban Carnival* to the memory-driven *A Day Spent On The Pier*, although there is a dreamlike atmosphere to *A Mirage In The Clouds* and *My Moonlight Dream*.

Eight of the 12 tracks feature vocals by Hayley Sanderson who follows Wakeman's lead and skilfully brings out the lyrical themes, while the English Rock Ensemble echo and embellish Wakeman's sonic sketches.

Hugh Fielder

Saxon

More Inspirations SILVER LINING

Second instalment of covers.

If 2021's *Inspirations* was a rather predictable exercise in paying homage to Saxon's influences (Beatles/Stones/Zeppelin), its successor is more rewarding. The artists and songs are mostly less obvious and even when they're not, Saxon breathe new life into old dogs such as The Who's *Substitute*, where Biff Byford is sneering bitterness incarnate, while they take a similar approach on *We Gotta Get Out Of This Place* to Joan Jett's tumultuous assault on *Dirty Deeds Done Dirt Cheap*. Elsewhere, they make an inspired, six-minute fist of Alex Harvey's *The Faith Healer* and pay tribute to Nazareth, with whom they toured in 1980 with a thrilling *Razamanaz*. They don't take tangents into country or jazz; they don't re-invent anything (although they're strangely polite on Kiss's *Detroit Rock City*) and they don't introduce us to anything remotely obscure. So what? They're fans sharing what they adore. We all do it: why shouldn't Saxon?

John Aizlewood

Paul Gilbert

The Dio Album

MASCOT/MUSIC THEORIES RECORDINGS

Misguided Ronnie James Dio tribute more hell than heaven.

Best known for his work with Racer X and Mr. Big, there's no denying that Paul Gilbert is a phenomenally talented guitarist, but he's had a shocker here. *The Dio Album* features 12 covers of some of the late legend's most iconic works with a certain twist: Gilbert has replaced the would-be vocals with verbatim lead guitar parts. Credit where it's due for the technical and no-doubt painstaking precision, but lacking the guiding nuance of a voice, classics like *Neon Knights* and *Starstruck* are reduced to jarring, overplayed jumbles. By track two's annihilation of *Kill The King*, any novelty has ejected itself from the solar system. This labour of love sadly misses the mark.

Chris Lord

Floor Jansen

Paragon REVAMP MUSIC BV

Nightwish singer goes it alone to plough a broader furrow.

You get the feeling that despite being the formidable-lunged voice of Finnish symphonic metal titans Nightwish, this Dutch belter has eyes on a move away from their more cultish audience to more mainstream acclaim, but on the first album under her own name the same strengths that stand out with her alma mater prove her trump cards again.

Invincible and *Come Full Circle* veer too close to 80s-style AOR blandness. But far more striking are the numbers when Jansen allows herself the freedom to let rip from a theoretical mountaintop, with some vague sense of a natural disaster unfolding around her, as on the sweeping melodrama of *Storm* or the thunderous chamber rock of the final track and recent single *Fire*. Likewise, third single *Me Without You* works when she really reaches for the high notes as if reaching out for something she's just lost as it shrinks over the horizon.

Johnny Sharp

Mudhoney

Plastic Eternity SUB POP

11th studio album for Sub Pop's flagship band.

The album titles give the game away: *Flush The Fascists*, *Cascades Of Crap*, *Severed Dreams In The Sleeper Cell*: Mudhoney are still – if not more – pissed off about everything, the layers and sewers of shit that swamp everyday life, guitars howling and wailing dissatisfaction, singer Mark Arm's howl as feral and incisive and sarcastic as ever. *Here Comes Sickness* the Seattle stalwarts sang over three decades ago, and here it is in 2023, rubbing its disease and despair in your face.

It's been 35 years of Sub Pop, 35 years of Mudhoney and 35 years of grunge/whatever you want to call it babe, but no one wants to remove their foot from the Big Muff any time soon. Shades of Dead Moon and The Scientists, US 80s hardcore litter tracks like *Plasticity* and the monstrous swirl of lead single *Almost Everything* but Mudhoney remain their own, inherent force of nature.

Everett True

Fall Out Boy

So Much (For) Stardust

FUELED BY RAMEN

A bigger, poppier FOB achieve emo pop dominance.

With Brendon Urie somehow dissolving the one-man band that is Panic! At The Disco and Travis Barker's finger refusing to stay un-broken, Chicago's Fall Out Boy are essentially the last emo pop behemoths standing right now. Their eighth album, while planted very much in the fertile angst pop furrow they've made their own, edges ever closer to Panic!'s ultra-pop territory, as if out to hoover up Urie's scattering fanbase. While Patrick Stump sings of therapy, addiction, misery, delicious heartbreak (*Heartbreak Feels So Good*, they conclude) and pandemic inertia ('*we got to throw this year away like a bad luck show*'), it's largely to driving emo bops, rom-com teen rock and – on tracks such as *What A Time To Be Alive*, *So Good Right Now* and *Hold Me Like A Grudge* – rocked-up Bruno Mars, right down to the breathless Jacko gasps. Its best moments veer away into austere orchestral grandeur: the title track is fittingly climactic and *Love From The Other Side* resembles a civilisation tunefully collapsing.

Mark Beaumont

ROUND-UP: SLEAZE

By Sleazegrinder

The Stripp: ain't afraid to go ugly-nuts.

The Stripp

Ain't No Crime To Rock N' Roll SELF-RELEASED

Aussie ballbusters The Stripp are indefatigable freedom fighters in the war against everything Not-Rock. Some dumbass rock journalist (or Kiss member) declares rock'n'roll dead for the zillionth time? Stripp keeps rocking. The record industry takes a dive, radio disappears, the pinball machine breaks down for good? The Stripp keeps rocking. You couldn't stop these fuckers from rocking with a two-ton Nagasaki teenage warhead. This aptly-titled album is a full-on smash, a slobbery smorgasbord of macho riffola and swaggering hooks. It's 80s-inspired action rock for sure, but The Stripp ain't afraid to go ugly-nuts when it's called for, either. The sore-throated ripper *Witch Hunt*, for example, tore my head clean off and nailed it to the wall. There's poppier and punkier tracks on deck too (*Redline*, *Back in Action*) and even a smouldering dope-rock epic (*Alien Queen*) but for the most part, *Ain't No Crime to Rock N' Roll* is flash metal suicide of the highest order. A true party bus of a record. Jump on and go wild.

Rock'n

Rock'n SELF-RELEASED

Maybe it doesn't mean much to say this is my fave album of the year since I'm writing this in February, but I'm telling you right now if I like one better I'll eat my goddamn hat and invite you over to watch. Rock'n are Vancouver boneheads with nothing on their minds except rocking. It sounds like AC/DC after hitting Angus in the head with a frying pan. Perfect in every way.

"Demons"

Rock N Roll With The Punches SELF-RELEASED

Stockholm savages "Demons" are nothing if not prolific, so you'd be forgiven for missing a track or two along the way. Luckily, the boys have collected some of their faves from the past 30-ish (!) years and re-recorded, re-vamped, and re-boogied them. Relive in throbbing, real-life super-stereo. Effortlessly rocking, endlessly satisfying.

The Erotics

Rot In The Shade SELF-RELEASED

NY scuzz-kings The Erotics are America's dirtiest, darkest, sleaziest well-kept secret. Tell your friends, inform the government, alert the cops, they are coming for your children. What if Alice Cooper sang for Love/Hate? What if WASP and Mötley Crüe were the same band? What if we hit 1987 and stayed there forever? Your best/worst nightmare is waiting for you.

OC Rippers

Happy Hours Air Travel Club RUINED RECORDS

Ideal for fans of brevity: rarely does a song breach the two-minute mark, yet OC Rippers get the job done. Crank it up and it slams you in the head like a claw hammer, leaving you wanting more. A little Dwarves, a little AC/DC, a little murder and mayhem, but mostly pure adrenaline-soaked punk rock'n'roll action.

Crown Lands

Fearless SPINEFARM

Canadian duo's second album: a veritable 70s pomp and prog love-in.

Mere minutes into *Starlifter: Fearless Pt. II*, the hefty 18-minutes-plus opener to Crown Lands' new album, you find yourself playing, which Rush song is this? Split into nine parts, naturally, and starting with *Overture* (I'm not making this up), you think to yourself: *Begin Transmission*, that part's from *Hemispheres*, right? Didn't I originally hear that section from *Requiem* in *La Villa Strangiato*? The next time you have some friends over for, I don't know, a Dungeons & Dragons evening, it's a fun party game you can all play. I'm not being facetious, but there are moments on this sometimes excellent record where you're completely taken out of the moment because you think you just heard *Red Barchetta*, which, dependent on your mood, can be laudable or risible.

The duo (and that they can sound almost exactly like Rush with one less member is astounding) of Cody Bowles and Kevin Comeau – I'd list the instruments they play, but that would take up the rest of the review – are so very deep in the 70s Rush oeuvre that you can almost see Geddy Lee's kimono flapping about. There's even a thank you to producer Terry Brown for his work on the record; close your eyes and you could be back in time, somewhere in the twilight zone.

The playing and Cody Bowles's sky-high vocals are peerless (though on occasion they do veer off into a world set somewhere between Andrew Wood from Mother Love Bone and Eric Cartman when he sat in with Lil' Rush), and they even manage to sing lyrics like *'Event Horizon/Point of no return/Black hole!'* with a straight face.

Which perhaps sounds harsher than I might mean it to. The record's peppered with great songs, even their 18-minute opus (a word you feel they'll enjoy) glides along beautifully, and the second half of the record pulls off some daring feats of pomp pop and rock. *Dreamer Of The Dawn* tears along with real panache, *The Shadow* has a wonderful, stuttering feel and a great overarching melody that is pure joy. *Lady Of The Lake* is prime Zeppelin at their woozy best, and *The Citadel* is lovely, lilting pomp complete with dreamy piano and a melody line that puts you in mind of early Queen. So, temper your cynicism, take a moment to listen, maybe hold your fire.

Philip Wilding

Levellers

Together All The Way

ON THE FIDDLE

Second set of acoustic re-workings from the crusties.

The 21st century has thrown up a whole heap of musical anomalies that would have once been considered the work of a fevered mind – just check the band reunion, the classic album played in full and, most recently, the re-working of existing material for evidence. Joining the ranks of ELO, U2 and Roger Waters among others for another round are folk-punks Levellers.

Given the band's modus operandi, the notion of regurgitating elements of their back catalogue as acoustic versions would suggest a case of diminishing returns. And so it proves. *The Game*'s lively jaunt is slowed to a crawl while *The Battle Of The Beanfield* – reworked with cellos – loses its original fury. And though *Together All The Way*'s heft kicks arse, it's too little too late.

While this will undoubtedly work in a live setting, there's nothing here that'll replace the affection held for the originals.

Julian Marszalek

Enslaved

Heimdal NUCLEAR BLAST

Norwegian prog metal luminaries march to Valhalla.

Like the Norse mythology that inspires them, Bergen's Enslaved straddle two worlds at once. There's the earthbound world of black metal, which spawned them over three decades ago. And then there's the soaring, skybound world of prog metal, which has increasingly influenced the second half of their career.

Sixteen albums in, and they've perfected the balance between the two. *Heimdal* – named after the guardian of the gods of Valhalla – once again sees Enslaved expertly stirring these two influences together. *Congelia* sweetens its hammered rhythms and gargled vocals with sweeping keyboards, *Forest Dweller* is by turns sweeping and atmospheric, at least until singer Grutle Kjellson unleashes his bestial roar, and *Caravans To Another World* is head-spinning space rock performed by warriors who sound like they wrestle bears before breakfast.

There will be few surprises for anyone who has heard any of *Heimdal*'s 15 predecessors, and those with sensitive ears will find its more extreme moments indigestible, but it remains impressive stuff.

Dave Everley

Demons Down

I Stand FRONTIERS

Frontiers attempt to conjure a pomp-rock revival.

Don't be fooled by the name. *Demons Down* was the title of the third album from the Gene Simmons-signed US pomp-rockers House Of Lords, but while this spin-off crew reunites the rhythm section from the line-up responsible for 1988's iconic self-titled debut – bassist Chuck Wright and drummer Ken Mary – plus current guitarist Jimi Bell, the real stars of House Of Lords, singer James Christian (who continues to drive forward the present incarnation) and long-lost former Angel keyboard wizard Gregg Giuffria, are both conspicuous by their absence.

Demons Down are completed by Chilean singer James Robledo from the band Sinner's Blood and Francesco Savino, guitarist of Italians False Minnows. On the positive side, Robledo is sufficiently cultured for the classiness of *I Stand*, *Down In A Hole* and *Book Of Love*, though with the record having been largely written by Frontiers' in-house producer Alessandro Del Vecchio regrettably there are too many filler songs.

Dave Ling

The Hold Steady

The Price Of Progress

POSITIVE JAMS/THIRTY TIGERS

Beyond Brooklyn, an exotic world of party rock awaits.

In twenty years, The Hold Steady's world has expanded vastly beyond the drug-drenched Brooklyn rock bar they've so often frequented – and encapsulated - in song. A continuation of 2021's excellent *Open Door Policy* by dint of being recorded in the same studio with producer Josh Kaufman, but delving deeper into funk groove and psych textures, this expansive ninth

record pays a flying visit to such old haunts, to find its hedonistic crowd now wracked with late-capitalist economic woes (*Carlos Is Crying*) and struggling to stay rock'n'roll post-rehab (*Sideways Skull*). Otherwise it sets off for ill-fated adventure. The stirring, psychedelic *Grand Junction* follows a couple road-tripping into big-sky USA in search of belonging, only to find themselves trapped in their own relationship. *The Birdwatchers* details a bout of rather too immersive revolution tourism, and ballroom ballad *Distortions Of Faith* tells the tale of a western superstar playing a gig for a despot, mid-insurrection.

Mark Beaumont

Andy White & Tim Finn

AT FLOATING WORLD

A follow-up to ALT's *Altitude* album of 1995.

Andy White (solo artist/ sometime Peter Gabriel co-writer) and Split Enz founder Neil Finn reunited (the "L" of ALT – Hothouse Flowers founder Liam Ó Maonlaí – elected to pass). The pair bounced tracks between home studios then sent the files to ace producer John Leckie (who'd worked with White before). Leckie surprised them by using pretty much everything to create fabulously rich textures.

Laden with hooks, in places it plays like an echo of the album Finn made with his brother Neil in 2004. It's quirky but never twee, cleverly delivering protest (as on *Three Sheep Grazing*, surely the first use of *'contented herbivores'* in a lyric) and politics (*Happiness Index*) before ending on *Rock N Roll Star*, a witty pastiche of Bowie and Bolan.

Neil Jeffries

Lordi

Screem Writers Guild

ATOMIC FIRE

Finnish horror gonks keep the anthems coming.

After releasing the audacious, seven-album splurge of *Lordiversity* in 2021, Finland's celebrated conquerors of Eurovision could be forgiven for running out of ideas. They haven't, of course, and *Screem Writers Guild* is just as absurdly entertaining as fans have come to expect. Although embellished with goofy, horror-style spoken interludes and creepy, faux-cinematic atmospherics, this is really an album of straight-ahead melodic metal anthems, with a huge debt to Alice Cooper and Ozzy displayed throughout, and with no apology. From bombastic sing-alongs like *Lucyfer Prime Evil* and *Unliving Picture Show*, to disco-rock tear-jerker *Thing In The Cage*, dewy-eyed ballad *The Bride* and the pristine AOR of *Vampyro Fang Club* and *In The Castle Of Dracooolove*, all beastly (and ludicrous) life is here. New guitarist Kone acquits himself admirably and closer *End Credits* – wherein frontman Mr. Lordi goes full Meat Loaf – is all the better for his soaring solo.

Dom Lawson

The New Death Cult

Super Natural INDIE

Norwegian alt.rockers step up.

Having ditched the skull-masked sci-fi schtick of their self-titled 2019 debut, The NDC now have names instead of worker drone pseudonyms and an even sharper sense of drive and purpose. Focusing on lyrics with more of a personal and introspective edge, the band nevertheless still sound defiantly energised, Jon Vegard Naess's often dreamy and soulful vocals perfectly complementing their talent for fantastic earworm riffs. Sitting somewhere in the same sonic space as Biffy Clyro and Muse, pretty much all of these dozen tracks could be released as singles; *Shards* is as sweetly pulversing as it is addictive, *Antidote, Superglue* and *Machines* all feature solid gold choruses, while *Different/One Blood* feels like the Foos reimagining Zep's *Immigrant Song*. It all sounds uplifting, expansive and quite immense, the attention to detail and memorable tune-smithery second to none.

Essi Berelian

Fake Names

Expendables EPITAPH

Post-hardcore dream team

When it comes to pedigree, Fake Names are the Best In Show rosette-winners of the punk world. Featuring Dennis Lyxzén of Refused and The [International] Noise Conspiracy, Brian Baker of Minor Threat/Bad Religion/Dag Nasty, Michael Hampton of SOA/Embrace, Johnny Temple of Girls Against Boys, and Brendan Canty of Fugazi/Rites of Spring, their second album is a *blast*. Gone is the grime and distortion of their debut (essentially a demo released warts and all), and in comes scratchy, catchy melody and an irresistible bounce buffed to a fine sheen by producer Adam "atom" Greenspan. The title track, in particular, is a glorious celebration of our own absolute pointlessness as a species – imagine making *that* concept this much fun. This is perfect, breathlessly paced, life-affirming post-hardcore moulded by some of the genre's finest craftsmen, gilded with garage-rock cool and elevated with soaring alt.pop harmonies. *Expendables* is, ironically enough, utterly essential.

Emma Johnston

Punk Rock Factory

It's Just A Stage We're Going Through

SAUSAGE FACTORY

Is this really what Sid died for?

Punk Rock Factory are a band dedicated to making punk covers of non-punk songs? It must've been a great concept after 10 pints, but surely the following day's hangover suggested otherwise?

Here the quartet turn their attention to songs from stage and screen musicals, and the results are every bit as horrendous as that conceit sounds. What did ABBA's *Mamma Mia* do to deserve this treatment? Surely we can agree that the Four Seasons' *December, 1963 (Oh, What A Night)* is fine as it is? And the mangling of *You're The One That I Want* makes you appreciate the sensitivity of Hylda Baker & Arthur Mullard's version.

Julian Marszalek

ROUND-UP: MELODIC ROCK

By Dave Ling

Seventh Crystal: relentless Swedish AOR.

Seventh Crystal

Wonderland FRONTIERS

What on earth are they putting into the water in Sweden? Recent years have produced a laser-guided procession of top quality melodic rock acts. From H.e.a.t and W.E.T. to Eclipse, Perfect Plan, Creye, One Desire and Art Nation, the factory shows little sign of slowing down. Following one of the best debut releases of 2021, Seventh Crystal's *Wonderland* sees the Gothenburg-based six-piece basing their oeuvre upon a mildly heavier foundation while retaining the ingredients that made *Delirium* so memorable – the smooth, confident voice of Kristian Fyhr complemented by durable yet strangely unobtrusive guitars and waves of dancing keyboards. To use the term 'modern' would be opening a can of worms, though there's no mistaking the influence of pop on the Seventh Crystal sound, especially during *Higher Ground, Hollow* and the rousing, irresistible *My Own Way*. No matter what else goes on in any song, the hook always comes first.

While so many current Scandi-AOR albums gradually lose their impetus, this one just keeps on going. And going.

Roxanne

Stereo Typical RAT PAK

Back in 2018, three decades after a debut for Scotti Brothers, these Californians knocked it out of the park with a knowingly titled second album, *Radio Silence*. Featuring cameos from Paul Gilbert, Jeff Scott Soto and Dug Pinnick, *Stereo Typical* might fall a bit short when compared to its illustrious predecessor, though it stands head and shoulders above most of the competition.

Star Circus

Separate Sides

DIAMOND FORMATION MUSIC

This debut crept out a couple of months ago but deserves a mention. Star Circus are the brainchild of singer and songwriter Dave Winkler, a disciple of Cheap Trick, Lizzy, Queen and Leppard. Though those influences are sometimes too blatant, catchy ditties like *Save Your Life, Something and Just Like In A Movie* suggest bags of potential.

Revolution Saints

Eagle Flight FRONTIERS

If a week is a long time in politics, within the world of melodic hard rock four albums lasts a lifetime. Once fêted as saviours of the scene, the fortunes of supergroup Revolution Saints – now minus bassist Jack Blades and Doug Aldrich – have dipped alarmingly. *Eagle Flight* isn't a really terrible record, but it does represent the sound of a band treading water.

Bai Bang

Sha Na Na Na PRIDE & JOY MUSIC

At this chilly time of the year, which one of us doesn't harbour a secret guilty wish for sunshine, cocktails, bandanas, cut-off denim shorts and refreshingly meaningless audio kitsch? *Sha Na Na Na*, the newest album from these American-sounding, Helsingborg (Sweden)-based glam-rockers is a smooth-sounding, fabulously dumb cartoon beach barbecue come to life.

HARD STUFF ALBUMS

U2

Songs of Surrender *ISLAND*

Skeletal covers of stadium bangers.

Bono extracted a great deal of surprise on last year's *Surrender* memoir. It would have been rude if he'd skipped the stories about Bowie, Sinatra and the Pope, and cheers, he obliged with wide-angled accounts and bonus context. But the really compelling stuff was about family, faith and political horse trading. Next up, Bono took liberties with the format of the audio book, accenting the life events with song fragments. Later, he sang stripped-down tunes on his reading tour. Now there's a 40-track album of songs that mostly relate to the book, but not exactly so.

When it all connects, there's a new understanding of the song or the author. A story that deeply resonated in *Surrender* was the death of Michael Hutchence and collateral hurt with Paula Yates, Bob Geldof and Helena Christensen. In the lyric of *Stuck in A Moment You Can't Get Out Of*, Bono tries to make a plea deal with Hutchence. And in this new, skeletal version, he's singing to a ghost and there is zero chance of a re-run. The ache is severe.

It seems that Edge has led with the making of this new album, a job of "reimagining". Many of the songs were written in decades of hurtling success, intended to rumble the foundations of every stadium. So, when you extract the martial snare, the digital delay pedal and the bellowing refrain, what will be left? In this sense, *Songs of Surrender* is a precarious work of discovery.

Walk On is the most actively revised song here, away from thoughts of Aung San Suu Kyi, the now-discredited leader of Myamar and repositioned in Ukraine. Sure enough, the band did play in the Kyiv subway station in 2022 and that's your busking rationale. Imperfections on the recording seem to fit with the recent event.

Likewise, there's a late-night vulnerability on *Stay* that fits with the story. Bono has often referenced Lou Reed and his partied-out whisper and it serves him well across the record. It's useful to hear the heroin lows of *Bad* without the usual tumult. And bless the ever accommodating *One*, which regards life from a rear-view mirror and offers a few consoling prayers.

It makes sense with the book on your lap, but otherwise, the album may not convince. The acoustics are peculiar on tracks like *Pride* and the vocal mic seems compressed, rather than expansive. Something to do with surrender, perhaps. What remains of it, when you give yourself away.

Stuart Bailie

Justin Tipton & The Troublemakers

Burn These Bridges

SELF-RELEASED

Authentic Texas-style Americana.

With a 2019 self-titled solo debut already under his belt, Justin Tipton's follow-up harnesses a bunch of worthy southern rock influences – think Band of Heathens, Tom Petty and Steve Earle among others – and delivers a set that showcases some impressive songwriting chops. Kicking off with the rattling *Shake 'Em On Down*, the album settles into a comfortable groove of largely countrified mid-paced tunes like *Stay, Some Days* and *Don't Make Me Sleep Alone*, a sweet and sentimental duet with local Dallas singer Frankie Leonie. Maybe Tipton's approach is a bit too laidback and mellow in places because the album really comes alive when there's a bit more bite to the songs as in the cheeky *Your Momma Don't Like Me*, the tough and defiant rocker *Back To Being Me* and stomping title track. Altogether a fine bunch of tunes, but you can't help feeling there's a much harder-rocking band just waiting to be unleashed.

Essi Berelian

L.A. Guns

Black Diamonds

FRONTIERS MUSIC

Hollywood warhorses prove impervious to time and trends.

Three albums since L.A. Guns guitarist Tracii Guns and singer Phil Lewis patched up their differences and got back together, and the reunion seems to be holding. *Black Diamond*, their fourteenth album in total, is a blast of unadulterated hard rock that calls back to the Sunset Strip's late-80s heyday without losing itself in nostalgia.

Howling opening track *You Betray* crackles with electricity and menace, rooting it squarely in the here and now, and *Gonna Lose*'s sleaze rock energy is punctuated by a billowing, jangling breakdown, but *Black Diamonds* mostly wears its Hollywood heritage on the sleeve of its battered leather jacket. *Got It Wrong* hitches Lewis' charisma-over-technique vocal to an itchy Guns riff, the sneering *Babylon* could have snuck onto either of their first two albums without anyone noticing, and *Diamonds* is a scuffed, bad boy ballad with a killer chorus.

The occasional concession to modernity aside, there's little here to scare the horses. But then no one is coming to an L.A. Guns album for prog-jazz epics, just pure-blooded rock'n'roll. And with *Black Diamonds*, it's job done on that front.

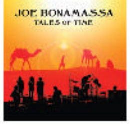
Dave Everley

Joe Bonamassa

Tales Of Time

J&R ADVENTURES/PROVOGUE

JoBo brings his spectacular blues-rock to the big, red rock.



Considering that Joe Bonamassa has somehow released more live albums than solo studio recordings, it's reasonable to ask if further concert captures are even newsworthy. On the contrary, *Tales Of Time* comprises the New Yorker's most compelling live collection to date. 2021 album *Time Clocks* finally gets the airing it deserves, and at Colorado's striking Red Rocks Amphitheatre, these songs radiate with bluesy majesty. *Notches* and *The Heart That Never Waits* are both irresistible with devil-may-care swagger and Bonamassa's fiery flourishes. The whole band is on remarkable form, but the extraordinary backing singers Mahalia Barnes, Jade MacRae and Dannielle DeAndrea elevate *Mind's Eye* and *Time Clocks* to a near spiritual experience. Beware, this album guarantees serious gig envy…

Chris Lord

Black Honey

A Fistful Of Peaches *FOXFIVE*

The pop-rock quartet's third mixes up glamour with grit.

Brighton's Black Honey have been on an upward trajectory since the release of their self-titled debut album in 2018. Scraping the Top 40, its follow up, *Written & Directed*, built on that initial promise by peaking at No.7 and high profile support slots with Liam Gallagher and IDLES brought them wider exposure. But for all of the surface level celebrations, there lurked both physical and mental health

issues that threatened to derail them. As such, *A Fistful Of Peaches* is a riposte to those trials and tribulations.

At their best – see the crunching *Up Against It* and *OK*'s pile-driving pulses – Black Honey fuse fuzzy rock with a processed production to stake their claim as heirs to Garbage. Singer Izzy Philips tackles their demons head on, uncompromising on difficult subject matter.

Though *Weirdo*'s pop smarts err on the glossy, there remain enough hooks and swagger here to convince.

Julian Marszalek

Overkill

Scorched NUCLEAR BLAST

Twenty times is the charm for deathless thrash metal vets.

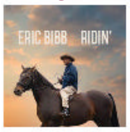
Overkill frontman Bobby 'Blitz' Ellsworth's signature lunatic yelp is one of metal's most recognizable, a fearsome howl of derision and defiance from the urine-soaked gutters of NYC. Nearly forty years since their inception as the underground's number one "blood metal" band, Blitz still sounds like a slasher villain hacking his way through the front row, and Overkill's 20th album is just the kind of gorgeously tawdry affair you'd hope for. *Scorched* is another in a very long list of pandemic albums – both in theme and production – and while the band will tell you it's a more melodic approach to their patented thrash 'n' potatoes sound, it still sounds like a wild night in the mosh pot, full of snarling rippers like *Going Home, Twist of the Wick* and the maniacal *Surgeon*. No ballads, no compromises, just pure, vicious thrash metal with all the energy and vitality of a band half their age.

Sleazegrinder

Eric Bibb

Ridin' REPUTE

Driving the train.



His enlightened upbringing, strong adherence to civil rights values and uncompromising honesty can make Eric Bibb seem mistakenly aloof for anyone not scratching beneath the surface, but his commitment to the blues is total.

The title of the opening track, *Family*, is a concept many blues singers would deliberately run away from but in Bibb's hands it's a call for unity in a face of divisiveness with its primitive, percussive beat, sparse guitar and gospel backing chorus. The album's title track finds Bibb deep in the boogie, now driving that freedom train himself with his guitar echo shovelling coal in the background.

Echoing effects and atmospheric textures are a recurring theme, contrasting with the generally clean sound, on the album which includes rearrangements of two traditional songs whose origins are lost in time: *500 Miles* (aka *900 Miles*) where a violin augments Bibb's melody, and *Sinner Man*, recorded live with a string band.

Hugh Fielder

Mike Tramp

Songs Of White Lion

FRONTIERS

Danish hard-rock troubadour revisits his back catalogue.

For a brief period in the late eighties, White Lion were genuine contenders for Bon Jovi's hair-metal crown, a brace of US Top 10 hits from double-platinum-selling 1987 album *Pride* suggesting world domination was around the corner, before being metaphorically mauled to death by the grunge wolf-pack led by Nirvana.

Their brief but glorious spell on the pop savannah has clearly been gnawing away at Scandinavian singer Mike Tramp ever since, with various incarnations of the band leading to 2008's studio reunion, *Return Of The Pride*.

This album completes the circle, with Tramp revisiting the group's best-known song with a muscular backing band. In this new context, fist-in-the-air anthem *Little Fighter* is even more powerful thanks to Tramp's whisky-soaked pipes, while a strident *Wait* – where Tramp intones *'I never had a chance to love you'* – comes with an added poignancy.

Tear-jerking anti-war ballad *When The Children Cry*, meanwhile – which is their biggest US hit – takes on an elegiac air, with the planet still on the precipice of disaster 30 years on.

Paul Moody

Starcrazy

Another Day, Another Squalor... SELF-RELEASED

Technicolour hard rock from down under.

Aussies Starcrazy certainly believe in keeping the listener wanting more as they chuck out another sparky mini-LP – six tracks of incendiary 70s style power pop and hard rock that will likely leave you wishing there were another half dozen for a full outing. No doubt with big thanks to the Slade skool of spelling, the glammy *Galaxy O Luv* is a ballsy hook-packed opener featuring guitarist Odin Wolf (brilliant name) tossing off some casually slick lead breaks; it's a frenetic formula repeated to great effect across *The Big Time, The Open Sea* – and especially *Hysterical* with its sky-rocketing radio-ready chorus. The super-short *Egging Me On* provides a concise punky diversion, while *Monday Morning (Prayer for Tony)* is a rumbling heavyweight closer featuring a sleazy cast of smackheads and bloodthirsty neighbours. Bright and breezy rock'n'roll with a welcome dark edge.

Essi Berelian

Adam Zindani

Black Eyes Blue VOICE OF VEGA

Stereophonics guitarist's solo debut: more rolls than rock.

Although Stereophonics are avowed fans of riff-driven rock, they've shown an underrated soulful side in recent years, and their latter-day guitarist might have had a hand in that, judging by the compositions on his first solo album. Indie-rock stompers are thin on the ground, but reliable mainstream pop smarts are well in evidence. It pushes no envelopes – numbers such as the title track and *What About Love* could have been released on a major label at any point in the last 40 years – but the songs are strong enough to divert attention from any lack of originality. *Believe In You* may steal the same lyrical idea as John Lennon's *God*, but the tune is a charmer and a half. And then when he does get heavier and Stereos-esque on *Should Have Known Better* the hooks cut through just as cleanly.

Johnny Sharp

BEST OF THE REST

Other new releases out this month

Miesha And The Spanks

Unconditional Love In Hi-Fi MINT

Assertive, affirming, swaggering and sassy, Calgary duo Miesha Louie (vocal/guitar) and Sean Hamilton (drums) drag Joan Jett glam-laced garage 'tude into a post-Wet Leg pop arena with full-beam Cyndi Lauper charisma and hook-heavy Runaway riffs as standard. **8/10**

Pop Evil

Skeletons MNRK

Haunted by Depeche Mode's *Violator*, *Skeleton*'s keys and guitars are blended into a smooth paté of loudness, and as on-trend rock vocals 101 gang-holler into the void, dehumanised beats pound the worlds slickest production toward yet another billion streams. Relentlessly meh. **6/10**

TV Smith & The Bored Teenagers

Replay The Adverts EASY ACTION

If you caught the ageless Teev making a fair old fist of stealing the show on The Damned's reunion tour with able assistance from Spanish Adverts tribute band the Bored Teenagers, here's an ideal souvenir. All the hits, impeccably (if pointlessly) re-recorded, but what larks! **7/10**

Yves Tumor

Praise A Lord Who Chews... WARP

The multi-disciplined artist AKA Sean Bowie's fifth album represents another genre-blind vault-forward: as thick, chewy, glampop tropes collide with cinematic chill-wave R&B and understated delivery drunkenly skews into epic immensity. Like Wire, Prince, and neither. **8/10**

Grande Royale

Welcome To Grime Town THE SIGN

In the grand tradition of so much post-Hellacopters Swedish rock, Grande Royale exhibit spiritual roots in Detroit stalwarts MC5 and Kiss, but there's more to this seventh LP than yet more Scand-dentikit garage rock. Polished, crafted; it's a more sophisticated strain of GR. **7/10**

The New Pornographers

Continue As A Guest MERGE

The Neko Case/Carl Newman-fronted New Pornographers promise plenty, they've an awesome Canuck indie pedigree which matched with lockdown focus can surely only end in classic. Yet while this ninth starts well (*Really Really Light*) it ultimately nags 'could do better'. And they have. **6/10**

Chappaqua Wrestling

Plus Ultra EMI

Brighton's Chappaquas have quite the political agenda, it's stitched into their lyrics, but it's easy to miss due to the attention-seducing nature of their simultaneously horizon-scoping/shoe-gazing sonics, it's the sixties end of the nineties again, yet repurposed with significant flair. **7/10**

The Nude Party

Rides On NEW WEST

Bringing the merest country honk of ersatz Nashville Stonesiness to the unfashionable end of Lou Reed's *Sally Can't Dance* seventies, a laconic Nude Party take things distinctly easy on this surprisingly more-ish collection and their overall groove benefits immensely. **8/10**

Dobbeltgjenger

The Twins APOLLON

On their fourth album of intrinsically perky pop-friendly alt.rock, Norway's spellchecktastic Dobbeltgjenger have, perhaps surprisingly, delivered a concept work born of a 'mental breakdown' suffered by vocalist Vegard Wikne. Joy Division? Nah. Cell division? Closer... **7/10**

Temples

Exotico ATO

Produced by Sean Ono Lennon and mixed by Flaming Lips' board-jockey Dave Fridmann, Temples' fourth leaps from the speakers tapping veins of electro-psych, hypno-kosmische and soft-focused unreality. A tranquilised Muse-ing Floyd on the dark side of the swoon. **8/10**

BEST OF THE REST REVIEWS BY IAN FORTNAM

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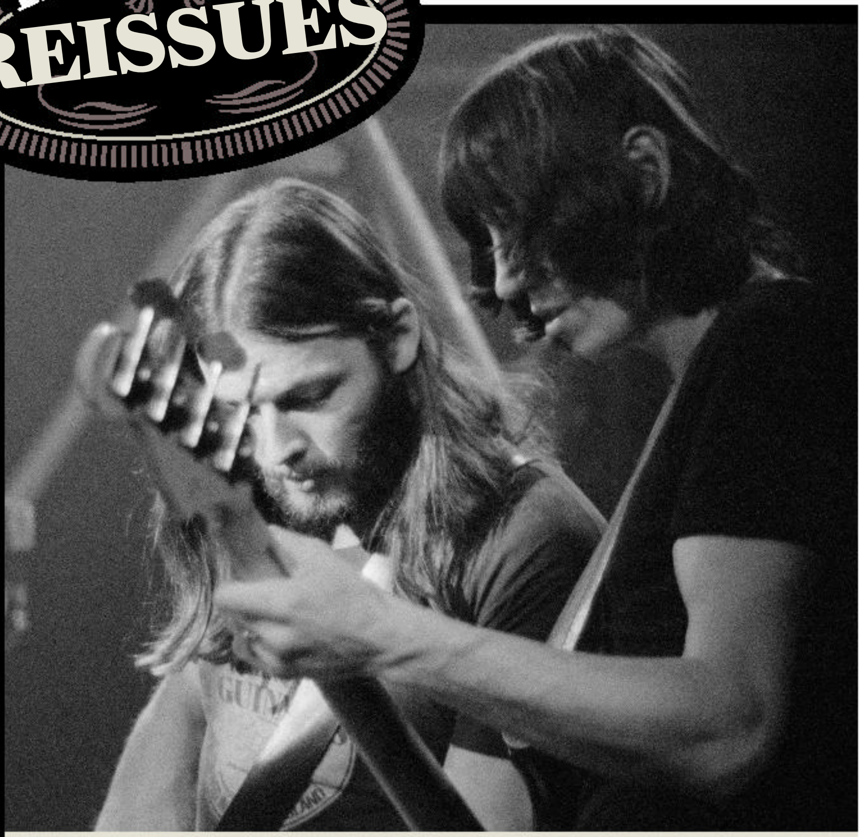
The Hard Stuff REISSUES



Pink Floyd

The Dark Side Of The Moon 50th Anniversary Edition Box Set *WARNER*

Ticking away the moments…

With over 50 million copies sold worldwide, *The Dark Side Of The Moon* was one of the first albums to join the select club of Records More Famous That The People Who Made Them: and like The Who's *Tommy* and Fleetwood Mac's *Rumours*, it's a record that both crystallised the group's image for ever but was also not entirely representative of their past. Before *The Dark Side Of The Moon*, Pink Floyd (who also once sported a now-forgotten "The") had been pop, psychedelic, and experimental: after it, they were a hugely popular yet strangely faceless stadium mega band and everything they did, from *Wish You Were Here* to *The Wall*, was measured against it.

Why was it so big? Perhaps because the lessons learned from previous experiments – tape loops, sound effects and spoken word – were combined with a new focus: Roger Waters (and Rick Wright's) downbeat, sceptical lyrics (*'Quiet desperation is the English way'*), set to concise, commercial melodies that suited David Gilmour's blue-eyed soul voice and direct guitar playing. With its superb production and perfectly smooth segueways, *The Dark Side Of The Moon* was *Abbey Road* for the seventies rock generation: an album that could be used to test your stereo, soundtrack a dinner party, make you think and roll a spliff on. Its themes were vague enough to be universal – war is bad, wealth is bad, we're all going to die – but the vagueness was undercut by Roger Waters' sharpness and intelligence. Add to that Clare Torry's astonishing vocals on *The Great Gig In The Sky* and a liberal use of smokey saxophone, and *The Dark Side Of The Moon* was transformed into something seemingly very far from *Several Species Of Small Furry Animals Gathered Together In A Cave And Grooving With A Pict*. Pink Floyd had created something new: very loud but also somehow very sensitive stadium rock. They would attempt the formula again with subsequent records but as Roger Waters began to both dominate the group and to write increasingly personal songs, they never could.

This new 50th Anniversary edition pulls out its big guns for the marketplace, comprising in its various forms (CD, gatefold vinyl, Blu-ray) new mixes, remastered stereo, vinyl singles, a photo book and additional material in the form of *Live At Wembley Empire Pool, London, 1974*, which is kind of self-describing. It's still an amazing, imposing album, and rightly remains a cornerstone of rock.

David Quantick

Iggy & The Stooges

Raw Power: 50th Anniversary Legacy Edition *COLUMBIA/LEGACY*

Digital respray finally brings definitive version.

Few bought *Raw Power* half a century ago but those that did formed the front-line of the UK punk movement. Since then, the album's coruscating onslaught has become routinely cited as one of the greatest, most influential rock albums of the early seventies.

Lassoed by Bowie in mid-'73 to join Lou Reed and Mott in his Mainman fold, Iggy eschewed UK musicians to recruit flamethrower guitarist James Williamson and recall the Asheton brothers from Ann Arbor to wrangle new songs led by *Search And Destroy*. After playing one pivotal gig, the renamed Iggy and the Stooges recorded *Raw Power* at CBS's London studio, refusing Bowie's production but begging his final mix knocked out swiftly in LA. The original album still emerged muddy and unbalanced yet gloriously full-on (apart from two contract-stipulated "ballads"), exploding with an untethered napalm energy unheard at the time. Getting into trouble waiting for its release against the skyrocketing success of *Ziggy Stardust* got the Stooges ejected from Mainman, leaving *Raw Power* their final cataclysmic studio statement.

To mark this auspicious anniversary, 2010's Deluxe repackage is upgraded with high-tech remasters of Bowie's mix and Iggy's '97 CD remix, both never sounding so good, joined by October 1973's chaotic live *Georgia Peaches* set and *Rare Power*; previously released for 2018's RSD – outtakes including *I'm Hungry*, *Doojiman* and *I Got A Right*, alternative mixes (*Shake Appeal*, *Death Trip*) and rehearsals (*Head On*).

The revolution started here.

Kris Needs

Carter USM

30 Something box set

CHRYSALIS

Jim Bob and Fruitbat's finest hour. Wot, no T-shirt?

This deep into the world-wearily complacent what-the-fuck-next? 21st century, it's hard to believe that Carter The Unstoppable Sex Machine weren't just a figment; a desperate ex-punk's wishful-thinking cheese dream. A Beastie Boys/Angus Young-inspired antidote to indie jangling and an ecstasy-encumbered pop zeitgeist reduced to giving flares another go. Chipmunk-faced cycling enthusiast Leslie 'Fruitbat' Carter thrashed-out irresistible ear-worm riffs to a DAT backing track as outwardly shy, inwardly seething human fringe James Robert Morrison wrapped righteous anger in punchy puns. Jim Bob was furious about everything and wrote emotively about slum landlords, rubbish radio, child abuse, bullying in the armed forces, alcoholism, racism, muggers, fat bastards, the prospect of shadows on his lungs and eventually, almost inevitably, aeroplane food. If you never went along to a Carter show, you couldn't possibly imagine just how good this unlikely pair of Sarf London chancers actually were. Carter gigs were like Clash gigs, football terraces supplanted into moshpits where uniformly social conscienced ne'er-do-wells in signed T-shirts bellowed along with every word and the sky turned black with stage-divers. Carter had a No.1 album and a dozen hit singles. Not indie chartbusters, proper ones. At their peak they even impossibly dreamed of a Christmas No.1, but that was in 1992.

In '91, they released their masterpiece, *30 Something*, which (now quadrupled in size to accommodate BBCs, lives, B-sides and the *In Bed With Carter* performance doco DVD) encompasses and distils all of the above into your one-stop shop for all things Carter.

Sweet Jesus, I'd forgotten how good they were…

Ian Fortnam

Ten Years After

A Space In Time *CHRYSALIS*

Space unfulfilled.

This 1971 album could have been a game changer for Ten Years After who were becoming trapped in a heavy pyrotechnic blues cliché after their incendiary clip of *I'm Going Home* in the *Woodstock* movie had been screened around the world.

A new US deal opened up new

JILL FURMANOVSKY/PRESS

possibilities, especially with producer Chris Kimsey on board. And it seemed to have worked. *I'd Love To Change The World* alternated between quiet, reflective passages and sudden bursts of energy, held together by Alvin Lee's distinctive voice.

That was largely down to Kimsey who had spotted a gentler, post-60s vibe in the air and leaned in to take advantage of expanding studio technology. It also worked on the folky *Here They Come*, the spacey blues of *Let The Sky Fall* and the Kinks-inflected *Over The Hill*.

But even as *A Space In Time* was becoming their best selling album it was all falling apart. Alvin Lee was refusing to play his hit live and refusing to release any more singles. A couple of albums later it was all acrimoniously over.

Hugh Fielder

Slade

Reissues BMG

Deluxe CD and coloured-vinyl.

It may have marked the beginning of the end of Slade's UK chart dominance — the album's third single only reached number 53, breaking a run of 17 consecutive hits — but *Nobody's Fools* **(7/10)** is considered by many — including Noddy Holder — to be their most cohesive studio album.

The result of having relocated to New York in the spring of 1975, it's far funkier than its predecessors, Holder and Lea tapping into a can-do culture on sweltering funk work-out *Do The Dirty* - as soupy as Manhattan in a heatwave - the Motown-inspired title track and joyous disco groove *L.A. Jinx*. All of which must have raised eyebrows on the rainswept terraces back 'ome on its release in April 1976.

Ironically it wasn't until 1983's *The Amazing Kamikaze Syndrome* **(8/10)** that the band finally got their US breakthrough, notching Top 40 US hits with the John Punter-produced *My Oh My* and *Run Runaway*. If the rest of the album sounds as dated as mullets and shoulder-pads, the songwriting is as strong as ever, *High And Dry* and *Cheap 'N' Nasty Luv* both drive-time staples in a parallel universe. With six additional tracks on the CD including a swing version of *My Oh My* and killer B-side *Can't Tame A Hurricane*, this is pretty much essential for any self-respecting Sladeologist.

Paul Moody

David Bowie

Aladdin Sane (50th Anniversary) PARLOPHONE

Perfection.

No, really. Let's not start arguments you're unable to win. Oh no, wait. That's the emotional mindfuckery of *Ziggy Stardust*, the album that preceded this wild and crazy jaunt written during Bowie's first trip to America, a ride that took us through life-affirming glam (*Watch That Man, The Jean Genie*), bizarre sexual landscapes (*Drive-In Saturday*), doo-wop, shades of jazz (*Aladdin Sane*), cabaret (*Time*) and even a god-awful Rolling Stones cover (*Let's Spend The Night Together*).

Not vital or unmissable like *Low* and *Station To Station* would later become, or stunningly game-changing like *Hunky Dory* was in 1971, *Aladdin Sane* is first and foremost a romp - a letting off of steam, inspired by fame and experimentation and whatever the hell took Bowie's passing fancy as he raced from genre to genre, riff to stoned riff. And it's still better than 99% of all other pre-'77 rock.

Cracked Actor is the template for glam-grunge generations to come: *Lady Grinning Soul* presages his pre-death albums by decades. It's not vital... but man, what a truckload of fun! And audacious as fuck.

This edition is released as a half-speed mastered album and a picture disc album that's pressed from the same master.

Everett True

Various Artists

Scrap Metal Vol. 2 RIDINGEASY

Scrap happy.

The subtitle tells it all: 'Excavated heavy metal from the era of excess.' As a grizzled veteran of the *Classic Rock* reviews section, you might remember when, not so long ago, this writer proffered a shit-crazy assessment of the obscurities included on *Scrap Metal Vol. 1*. Well, wouldja believe its successor ups the ante - and then some?

Vol. 2 has a strong NWOBHM flavour, beginning with JJ's *Powerhouse* and their 1983 song *Running For The Line*, which recalls the innocent headbanging fury of Bristolian bludgeoners Jaguar. Storm Queen's *Raising The Roof* follows in much the same fashion, full of shouts of "*WOW-HOW*" and "*EARGH-OW*". (While I was listening, my dog started barking; I genuinely thought the yaps were part of the soundtrack. Howzat for an accolade?!)

There's a slight dip in the middle with Metropolis' *The Raven* (shambolic stodge-hem) and Prowler's *Temporary Insanity* (half-baked Saxon) but Christian Steel arrive with *Need Your Love* and the memorable refrain: *'I don't need no lady to make my bed/I don't need no lady to kick me in the head.'*

It climaxes with Dark Ages' flash-metal *Star Trippin'* - with vocals that make Geddy Lee sound like Joe Cocker, and Sorcery's Whales, an amalgam of Led Zep and Lizzy.

Corking. Let's hope *Scrap Metal Vol. 3* gets released tomorrow at the very latest.

Geoff Barton

The Pretty Things

Complete Studio Albums: 1965-2020 MADFISH

13-LP anthology of Stones contemporaries who straddled the ages, remastered for vinyl.

Pedants will always note that it was not The Who but The Pretty Things who inaugurated that long-abandoned folly of sixties conceit, the Rock Opera, with *S.F. Sorrow*, originally released in December 1969 – five months in advance of *Tommy*. However, the secret to their longevity was more to keep pace with the times – if not to band-wagon jump, then certainly to shapeshift, with changes in personnel assisting in this respect over the course of many years.

Led by founding vocalist Phil May and guitarist Dick Taylor, their earliest albums, particularly their self-titled debut have about them an unpolished, rattling, rolling R&B quality, impossible to replicate.

This was their most successful period, singles-wise at least, with hits like *Honey, I Need*, raw and vibrant. However, as the 60s wore on, they fleshed out and revealed their versatility, adaptability. *Emotions* revealed glimmers of colour and brass, glimmers of psychedelia. Following the departure of Dick Taylor, 1970's *Parachute*, meanwhile, sounds in places uncannily *Abbey Road*-like, elegiac on *The Good Mr. Square* for example.

1972's *Freeway Madness* takes on the hues of the harmonic country rock of Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young. However, with the glam-saucy *Silk Torpedo*, they took on some of the heft and metal weight of early 70s Bowie and Stones.

1976's *Savage Eyes* was similarly raucous but did contain moments of glistening beauty such as *Sad Eye* – a prettier thing altogether. But now punk and new wave had come to drive out the old older and 1980's *Cross Talk* was their attempt to reconcile themselves with the new spirit of the age, particularly the raging *No Future*, with its elements of Sting pastiche. However, the album was not a success, the times had changed just that bit too much. The Pretty Things split, existing only as a touring entity throughout the 1980s and 1990s.

Come 1999, however, and they returned with *...Rage Before Beauty*, featuring guest appearances by Ronnie Spector and David Gilmour, a sign of how respected and loved they were by their contemporaries. Featuring their 1966 line-up, they returned to their rattling R&B roots, no longer obliged to keep up with the times. And so it went to their final recording, *Bare As Bone, Bright As Blood*, a selection of bluesy covers, released just months after the death of Phil May.

David Stubbs

Wishbone Ash

Argus 50th Anniversary *MADFISH*

No Bones of contention here.

Let's set the Tardis time co-ordinates w-a-a-a-y back to December 1972. The annual rock-mag readers' poll results are in, and the Albums Of The Year, as reported by *Sounds* music weekly, include entries by ELP (*Trilogy*), Tull (*Thick As A Brick*), Bowie (*Ziggy Stardust*), T.Rex (*The Slider*) and, scraping in at the bottom of the Top 10, Purple's *Machine Head*.

So, which band's release occupies the coveted No.1 spot? None other than Wishbone Ash's *Argus*. Now, as someone who used to count the poll votes (and discard a fair few due to suspiciously similar fan-club and/or PR-inspired handwriting), this may seem surprising. But you know what? I reckon the *Sounds* scholars got it right. Because as someone once asked: Is *Argus* by Wishbone Ash the greatest least-known million-selling rock album ever made?

Fifty years down the line, *Argus* remains a class act. It's not really hard rock, it's not really prog, it occupies some sort of mystical netherworld in between. It's like CSN&Y with Flying Vs. Of course, the Ash are credited with inventing the twin lead-guitar duellin' malarkey later perfected by Gorham and Robertson in Thin Lizzy. But here the musical approach is so exquisite – often otherworldly – that in-your-face six-string heroics are something of an anathema. (Yes, even on the near-legendary *The King Will Come*. Is there such a thing as a subtle headbanger?)

There are three particularly great things about this seven-disc multi-format box set. The first is a track called *30 Seconds Of Silence For Side Break*. Yep, plonked between *Blowin' Free* (the end of the old vinyl Side One) and the aforementioned *The King* (the beginning of the old vinyl Side Two) is exactly that: a half-minute of nothingness, so one can imagine flipping the original 12-incher and reapplying needle to groove. Brilliant.

The second is mainman Martin Turner's *Argus* remix, which really does add new depth and dimension to the recording. On the original you can distinctly hear the tape hiss, which is in many ways part of its charm. Purists might criticise Turner's crisp-as-white-sheets sonic approach, but to this writer it's a real ear opener.

The third is the accompanying 48-page booklet, which isn't the usual throwaway flim-flam. It has the feel of a quality Sunday supplement, and there's a particularly illuminating section on Storm Thorgerson's iconic album artwork.

There is a fourth thing, actually, but it's something that's been present since '72: *'I thought I had a girl, I know because I seen her/ Her hair was golden brown, blowin' free like a cornfield.'* The mere action of typing those words sends shivers down my spine.

Geoff Barton

The Police

Greatest Hits *UPC*

All the biggies, now on heavyweight vinyl.

Right from the beginning there was widespread dislike/distrust/envy of The Police, what with their genre-bastardising 'white reggae', a muso guitarist who was no stranger to expensive chords, and a frontman with a soaring soulful voice and seemingly a bottomless bag of hit singles to dip into. That ain't right, right? But there wasn't a lot wrong with a lot of the music the trio made. And decades later there still isn't.

Roxanne. Every Breath You Take. Can't Stand Losing You. Wrapped Around Your Finger. Synchronicity II… Just reading the titles on this reissued *Greatest Hits* reminds you why The Police were so hugely successful. Great pop music, with memorable melodies and choruses, often deceptively simple musicianship, high-energy power-trio heft here, airy and spacious there. And while Sting is no Dylan, Cohen or Waits, there are smart lyrics nestled in some of his songs. But then for every Gordon Sumner-crafted verse or ear-worm chorus there's also a *'Made love to my pillow but it didn't seem right', 'That book by Nabokov'* or *'De do do do, de da da da'* clunker.

This is a straight reissue from '92 – albeit a half-speed remaster and this time on heavyweight vinyl – so there's no additional music or fancy packaging. It's the hits. On two vinyl platters. You know what you're getting. Take it or leave it. And if you haven't got all or even most of these tracks already (and you've got a turntable), then you really should take it.

Paul Henderson

Big Country

The Seer *PROPER/UMC*

Big music, big tunes, big suits.

Originally released in 1986 and completing the triptych of Big Country's early albums reissued on vinyl, *The Seer*'s folk-rock sound that paid homage to Celtic history jarred with the era's prevailing synthpop 'n' suits fashion. A discordancy perfectly encapsulated by the sleeve photo of lead single *Look Away*; the band incongruously stood on a remote snowy windswept hillside in full Armani get-up, pure freezing their baws off. Style over substance? Nae danger of that, son.

Bright and clean riffs set against a chugging near-heavy metal chorus, *Look Away* was Big Country's single biggest hit, featuring a dedicated return to the commercial singalong pop rock success of debut *The Crossing*. As such, *The Seer* contrasts with critically acclaimed aficionado favourite, the dense complexity of second album *Steeltown*.

Look Away's light and shade is redolent of the album's overall compositional diversity and accomplished arrangements. It's followed by the title track which – featuring Kate Bush on backing vocals – harks back to Big Country's roots. As an album, *The Seer* is rich in melody throughout and shot through with poignancy and sorrow in *Eiledon* and *Hold The Heart*. *One Great Thing* is the kind of feelgood rock anthem you might expect from Springsteen if he'd also come from Fife.

Alex Burrows

Eels

Reissues *E WORKS/PIAS*

2009-2010 trilogy.

By 2009, after six albums, it was clear Eels' tenuous grip on the mainstream was slipping. Mark "E" Everett's response was this trilogy of loosely connected albums focusing on desire, then loss and finally redemption, with just 14 months between first and last. Two of them reached No.1 in Belgium and now they're reissued on vinyl, albeit without extra tracks. As ever, E veers between wildly raucous and wearily resigned. He was at his rockiest on the urgent, priapic *Hombre Lobo: 12 Songs Of Desire* **(7/10)**, but his muddy self-production lessened the attack of *Prizefighter* and the garagey *Tremendous Dynamite*. For all that the appositely titled *Unhinged* channels Eddie Cochran's *Somethin' Else*, the Belgian No.2 *End Times* **(9/10)** is a grown-up. late-night break-up album, where the Souljacker had turned soul barer. E sounds broken (*'I just need you back'* he sighs on *In My Younger Days*) but beautiful, especially on the spine-tingling *Nowadays*. In contrast to its predecessor's

JILL FURMANOVSKY/PRESS

bleakness, as its title suggests, *Tomorrow Morning* (**8/10**) looks to the future with redemptive optimism. There's more electronica than usual, there's the dry wit which seemed to have deserted him (*Baby Loves Me* begins *'record company hates me'*). *This Is Where It Gets Good* could have graced Radiohead's *Amnesiac*. He's a treasure.

John Aizlewood

Jade Warrior

Wind Borne: The Island Albums 1974-78 ESOTERIC

Four of dynamic ambience.

By 1973, Jade Warrior had been dumped by their label Vertigo and were down to two former forklift truck drivers: guitarist Tony Duhig and multi-instrumentalist Jon Field. Enter Steve Winwood, who, after seeing them support Traffic, convinced Island's Chris Blackwell to take a chance. The result from a band whose unimaginative name threatened clodhopping pub rock was these four inventive, rather beautiful instrumental albums. They owed an obvious debt to *Tubular Bells* (on which Field supplied flutes), especially 1975's *Waves* which featured Winwood and comprised just one lengthy track per side. Elsewhere, they took tangents into eastern philosophy and prog, all without losing sight of Duhig's innovative Fripp-esque guitar work. Cited by Brian Eno as a major influence on his ambient period, 1974's *Floating World* was inspired by Japanese culture, without sounding remotely Japanese. The second side of 1976's *Kites* concerns a 9th Century Buddhist sage, but best came last (things got messy after Island) with 1978's deliciously filmic *Way Of The Sun*, which for all Duhig's pyrotechnics on *Carnival*, was a dip into Central and South American history. They didn't sell a bean of course, but surely that was never the point.

John Aizlewood

Foghat

Road Fever: Complete Bearsville Recordings 1972-1975 HNE

Bear' unnecessities.

Foghat emerged from the British blues boom of the late 1960s and through sheer grit and determination found fame and fortune in the US of A. While Stateside success eluded the likes of Status Quo and Slade, Foghat stuck to their guns and toured incessantly. This work ethic paid off and they snaffled an unlikely record deal with Bearsville Records, home to Todd Rundgren, Sparks and, er, Randy VanWarmer.

This set includes the band's first five albums that were released on Bearsville, plus a collection of mono and stereo singles edits on CD6. It's unremarkable stuff, if truth be told. While the aforementioned Quo (to whom Foghat's no-nonsense boogie has been compared) sparkled in the studio Foghat struggled to crank it up, particularly on their debut, which slowly deflates thanks to a lightweight production job by Dave Edmunds. Opening track, a version of Willie Dixon's *I Just Want To Make Love To You*, would eventually become the band's almighty theme tune but here sounds, frankly, pathetic.

The lacklustre theme continues via the albums *Foghat* (also known as *Rock & Roll*), *Energized*, *Rock And Roll Outlaws* and *Fool For The City*. It wasn't until *Foghat Live* came out in 1977 that songs such as *Honey Hush*, *Slow Ride* and *Home In My Hand* found their true storming potential. Sadly, that album is outside this box set's remit.

Geoff Barton

Hawkwind

Days Of The Underground: The Studio & Live Recordings 1977-1979 CHERRY RED

Studio albums with previously unreleased live material.

By 1977, Hawkwind were in the process of deconstruction following their early 70s success with *Silver Machine*. Lemmy had been dismissed and dancer Stacia had left the group in 1975. They were now fronted by Robert Calvert. However, both sonically and thematically, they managed not just to survive in the punk era but retain a good deal of relevancy.

Quark, Strangeness And Charm, though more streamlined in keeping with the times, maintained the kosmische flights of electronica that maintained them in an airspace all of their own in the UK, as on the track that gives this collection its title. 1978's *25 Years On* (credited to Hawklords, for legal reasons) has distinctly new wave-ish overtones as on the sardonic, drawling tones of *Flying Doctor*, despite its druggy theme. *PXR5* (1979), while also power-poppish, made a slight return to their space age, with the likes of *Uncle Sam's On Mars* helping maintain their reputation as honorary members of the krautrock club. *Robots*, a lament for the dreariness of commuter travel, also hints at the prospect of automation, a preoccupation of the late seventies.

The remaining discs include The Rockfield Studio sessions and the Can-esque *Cake Out*, as well as live recordings from among others De Montfort Hall, Leicester. The likes of *Brainstorm* are a reminder that for all their kosmische/experimental West German hankerings, Hawkwind were/are ultimately made of very English leather. They may have clipped their wings a little at this time but there is still an abundance of spacejam here to get your heads round.

David Stubbs

Elton John

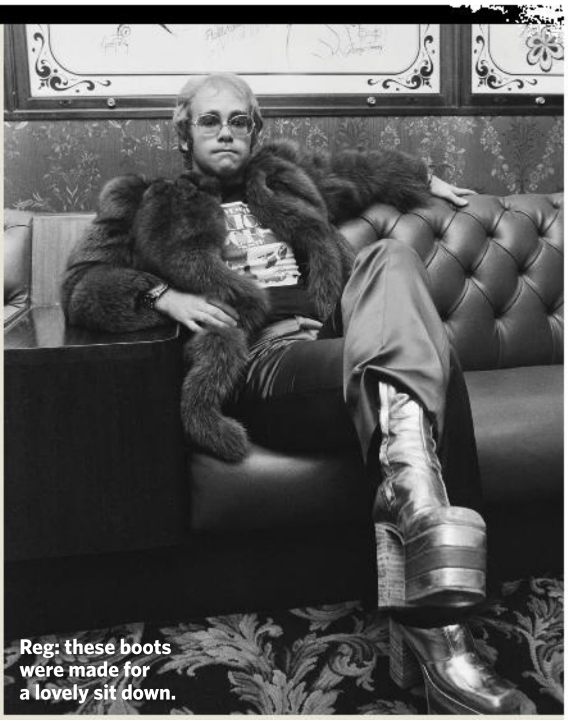
Honky Chateau: 50th anniversary EMI/UMR

The album that sent Elton high as a kite touches down again.

By consolidating Elton's rise to the top ranks of transatlantic stardom, *Honky Chateau* put the icing on his gateau. The first of seven consecutive US number ones, and a UK number two (its predecessor, *Madman Across The Water*, fell outside the Top 40), it found the peripatetic performer locating the happy balance between slightly doughy ballads and glitter-adjacent pop-rock which functioned as his default mode thereafter. Eschewing his previous lashings of strings, it showed off the swing of his favoured touring band and saw Bernie Taupin, as ever, bouncing between delicately insightful and crashingly indulgent.

In *Rocket Man*, the writing duo landed on a blend of sincere and silly which effectively communicated a sense of lonely longing while tripping over its lyrical laces with clumsy clunkers concerning the zero population of Mars. Clearly influenced by Bowie's *Space Oddity*, which producer Gus Dudgeon had also helmed, and by Ray Bradbury's short story *The Rocket Man*, it's stayed in orbit for such a long long time that it's arguably the pre-eminent Elton showpiece to this day. It also gave him a proper UK hit, just when he was fretting that *Your Song* had been a one-off and was growing jealous of mates like Marc Bolan.

Honky Cat works a jerky piano boogie as if trying to translate a Dr. John groove into pop music. However *I Think I'm Going To Kill Myself Today* aims to satirise teen angst but is so muddled that many took it seriously (U OK Hun?). *Susie (Dramas)* sprinkles grit across its garrulousness, while *Amy* is hamstrung by Elton's Mick Jagger impersonation.



Reg: these boots were made for a lovely sit down.

This reissue arrives 51 years after those fruitful 1972 Chateau d'Herouville sessions as a more modest package than last year's *Madman Across The Water* deluge. On 2CDs there's a booklet, a grab-bag of demos plus eight tracks from a Royal Festival Hall show that year where Elton debuted these songs. The 2LP set sacrifices the live cuts, which, while so competent they're not exactly bristling with edge, possess a different air to the out-takes, which digress little from the album's renditions bar a chuckle or two from Elton. The live *Mona Lisas And Mad Hatters*, a psalm-like success, catches him in masterly voice. *Honky Chateau* was the bedrock of Elton's ensuing bedlam.

Chris Roberts

HARD STUFF REISSUES

Porcupine Tree

Deadwing (Deluxe Book Edition) *TRANSMISSION*

Latter-day prog legends' 2005 set revisited every which way.

With help from a decade-long hiatus guaranteed to make hearts grow fonder, Porcupine Tree have now officially outgrown their own cult status. Now promoting last year's *Closure/Continuation* with arena tours, there's surely no better time for them to simultaneously promote one of the records that helped them build such a fanbase in the first place.

But this package offers quite a bit more than a reissue of 2005's *Deadwing*, and more, in fact, than the vast majority of equivalent box set reissue affairs can offer. Housed in a 108-page coffee table book filled with stylish artwork based around the original album along with studio and live shots, it offers an in-depth summation of the context in which the album was made – namely, the early 00s period when Steven Wilson's pioneers of hard-edged post-prog threatened to go overground but never quite managed it, left to tell tales of opening up for Yes in (literally) empty US enormodomes and shoehorning nods to nu metal into their repertoire.

That alone makes for intriguing 'content' (as someone started calling it around this time) alongside a Blu-ray documentary, a remastered original album plus demos and B-sides. As it surely should when we're being asked to shell out 80 quid for it, but the main course in this substantial packed lunch hasn't lost any of its flavour in the 18 years since it was made, and the extras complement it pretty handsomely.

The bonus demo version of *Arriving Somewhere But Not Here* benefits slightly from more organic-sounding vocal harmonies, and on the same second CD, the opening passages of *Lazarus* are softer-sung, lending it a more evocative quality, alongside pedal steel-style sounds, all the more haunting for being less produced.

The emotional swell of the remastered *Open Car* remains a mighty one, though, and even the aforementioned concession to the commercial climate, the grungey *Shallow*, sniffed at by hardcore fans and even Wilson himself at the time, sounds like a satisfyingly gutsy attempt to dabble in another of the many genres modern prog's leading light has since shown himself able to turn his hand.

Meanwhile, "lost" cuts such as *Godfearing* and shuddering instrumental B-side *Mother And Child Divided*, long celebrated by hardcore PT fans who like to highlight Gavin Harrison's virtuoso percussion chops, are material of such obvious quality even Wilson seems unable to remember why they didn't make the original album.

Johnny Sharp

Grant Lee Buffalo

Reissues *CHRYSALIS*

Remastered vinyl reissues for two 90s alt.rock gems.

For a band who moved very much at their own pace musically, Grant Lee Buffalo (I thought it was just one guy at first too), came out of the gates pretty quickly. Their unassuming looking debut – singer Grant Lee Phillips as a sleepy looking cover star – made critics and fellow musicians alike gawp. Michael Stipe practically declared them the future of rock'n'roll, which almost certainly nixed that.

They managed four albums though, and while not their most successful commercially, *Fuzzy* and *Mighty Joe Moon* (**both 8/10)** set the template for the GLB sound: chiming guitars, bruised lyrics, a folksy rasp cut deep with emotion, you can see why tour dates with bands like the Smashing Pumpkins and Sugar would be like catnip to the 90s indie kid. Which is not to timestamp these songs, they still live and breathe in the modern age. The aching thrum of *Fuzzy*, the hard edges that make up *Jupiter And Teardrop* or the gentle skip of *Dixie Drug Store* all still have something to give. Ditto the ringing *Lone Star Song* and the idling *Honey Don't Think* from *Mighty*... Memories made to cherish, maybe keep.

Philip Wilding

Blackmore's Night

Shadow Of The Moon

EARMUSIC

Axe hero makes career handbrake turn...

In 1995, Ritchie Blackmore told me about the music made with friends in convivial after-hours acoustic jams. "It just flows out of me..." he said, adding: "This is my private music, that's really me. But I don't want that to get out."

Two years later he had a change of heart and this first Blackmore's Night album – mostly acoustic and based on renaissance ballads popular five centuries earlier – was released to controversy and ridicule.

Today, other than the crystal clarity of Candice Night's voice, two things are surprising. One; it's often underpinned by a single skin drum, beaten by Blackmore himself. Two; fixating on the rare occasions he plays his Fender Stratocaster misses the point. This is *folk* music – as evinced by the cover of Renaissance's *Ocean Gypsy* and the flute of Ian Anderson gracing *Play Minstrel Play*.

Admittedly, *Writing On The Wall* is ruined by electronic percussion but there is much to admire. *Greensleeves* is a fine rendering of that famous traditional tune and *Spirit Of The Sea* handsomely echoes *Whiter Shade Of Pale*. This 25th anniversary remix (boosted by two songs re-recorded) remains the polar opposite of Deep Purple and Rainbow but has improved over time.

Neil Jeffries

Ken Hensley

Past & Present (Songs In Time) *CHERRY RED*

Choice bits of Ken.

Not so much an anthology as a six-CD celebration of the Uriah Heep founding member who had a long and varied career after quitting them in 1980 until his death in 2020.

Curated by his manager Steve Weltman, the first CD selects tracks from Hensley's first three solo albums, two recorded while he was in Uriah Heep, and also includes half a dozen Heep tracks from their 1972 classics, *Demons And Wizards* and *The Magician's Birthday*.

Skipping over the next two decades' nefarious adventures, CD2 resurrects Hensley's "born again" 1999 album recorded after his self-confessed "life saving" conversion to Christianity. However, his beliefs are not over-intrusive and he can be more accurately described as "a man of faith".

The next three CDs find Hensley getting his career gradually back on course with 2002's *Running Blind*, recorded in America, plus 2003's *The Last Dance* and 2005's *Cold Autumn Sunday*, made after he relocated to Spain.

The last CD rounds up tracks from his harder rocking *Live Fire* band between 2011 and 2013 that featured fine guitarist Ken Ingwersen. It concludes with a couple of tracks from his 2021 posthumous album, *My Book Of Answers*, recorded during the pandemic with lyrics by Russian poet (and fan) Vladimir Emelin.

Hugh Fielder

Linkin Park

Meteora 20th Anniversary Edition WARNER BROS

Nu metal band's second album lavishly expanded.

For all its similarities to *Hybrid Theory*, its successor *Meteora* was superior, especially when Linkin Park stretched their rock/grunge/rap/samples mélange on the heroic *Easier To Run* and *Numb*. There really was nobody quite like then.

Twenty years on, there's a 3CD version, a 4LP version and, most intriguingly, a massive Limited Edition Super Deluxe Box Set. It comprises 89 tracks spread over five vinyl LPs (remastered *Meteora*, plus two 2003 concerts including the previously released *Live In Texas*) and four CDs (*Meteora*, plus live rarities and demos). Oh and there are three DVDs (three additional concerts and a Making Of), plus assorted gubbins. It's quite the ride.

The concerts include a soaring cover of Nine Inch Nails's *Wish* and when rock and rap clash on *One Step Closer* in Nottingham ("this is one of the places we come to feed ourselves") it's spine-tingling.

Some previously available on fan club albums, some previously unreleased, the demos are little pieces of a giant jigsaw, so *Drawing* is an instrumental template for *Breaking The Habit* and the turbo-charged version of *Faint* eclipses the proper version. There's a lot of take in, but, for anyone with more than a passing interest in Linkin Park, it's pure catnip.

John Aizlewood

Filter

The Amalgamut CRAFT

Ohio band's difficult third album gets another chance.

Establishing his hit-making cred on Filter's 1995 debut *Short Bus* and its 1999 follow-up *Title Of Record*, Richard Patrick found commercial success slipping his grasp on 2002's *The Amalgamut*. While part of the blame can be levelled at the necessity of cancelling a supporting tour to enter rehab, *The Amalgamut*'s tendency to slip into middle-of-the-road post-grunge trappings doesn't help its case as an overlooked gem.

Yet, amid the almost-Creeds and brushes-with-Bush sit some great gems in the form of *American Cliché, Where Do We Go From Here, Columind* and *So I Quit,* all handy reminders of Patrick's ear for catchy, infectious melodies and lyrics that cast a critical eye on personal and national turmoil alike as he addresses addiction, Columbine and 9/11. That said, it's hard to imagine anyone but the ultimate Filter completist being excited about ten 'bonus' remixes of *Where Do We Go From Here* – a nu metal relic best left buried.

Rich Hobson

Van Der Graaf Generator

The Bath Forum Concert ESOTERIC

Prog's square pegs in all their wonky glory.

After being scuppered multiple times, VdGG were finally able to tour again the UK in early 2022. This boxed extravaganza captures the legendary prog trio at the triumphant final show in Bath, with the music on two discs and the full, filmed show on DVD and Blu-ray. Devotees will need no persuading, but it's hard not to wish that everybody could witness this extraordinary band in action.

The set is drawn from both the early years of the band, their initial comeback in the mid-noughties and, prominently, their most recent album *Do Not Disturb*. Opening with a swivel-eyed angularity of *Interference Patterns* and following it with a seething *Every Bloody Emperor*, Van der Graaf Generator remain prog's militant awkward squad, with every bittersweet melody or moment of fragility offset by a giant barrage of squawking noise. Labyrinthine marathons like *A Louse Is Not A Home* and *Childlike Faith In Childhood's End* are skilfully dispatched, but sound every bit as fresh and new as *Do Not Disturb* cuts like *Alfa Berlina, Room 1210* and the elegant, ghostly *Go*. It's a perfectly imperfect and often ferocious performance that peaks with the melancholy sprawl of *Over The Hill*, a fiery stride through *Man-Erg*, and an impossibly graceful *House With No Door*. There's still no one like them. No, *you're* crying.

Dom Lawson

The Residents

The Third Reich Rock'n'Roll CHERRY RED

Passion as a fascism.

In the seventies, mainstream rock often flirted with the odd bit of Nazi imagery, sometimes to shock and sometimes because the whole era was still full of WW2: but nobody went as far in connecting rock'n'roll with Hitler's Germany as the Residents did with their second album. Although *The Third Reich Rock'n'Roll* does feature a swastika-ed up Dick Clarke on the cover, its main intent is to mock the alleged fascism of rock music as a whole by performing loads of cover versions in a Residents kind of way: namely slowed-down, sped-up and with funny voices. The effect now is less of a shock and more marvelling at how long they can keep it up for, like Mike Oldfield performing *Fish Heads* over two sides of vinyl: but it is, somehow, always fun. This new edition is copious, with a whole live side, and is still very enjoyable.

David Quantick

Hanoi Rocks

Oriental Beat (40th Anniversary) SVART

Remixed Scandirock essential.

At first glance this doesn't seem like much of a Deluxe Reissue to mark four decades of the Finnish glam catalysts' defining second. Yeah, you get a choice of three vinyls (baby blue, blood red, couldn't-be-arsed black) or, if you're still insisting on persisting with ye olde CD, a digipack. And there's an A2 poster with the vinyls because, obviously, we all still live in a pinup-plastered back bedroom in our parents' house. What you don't get are any extra tracks, or a bonus disc of lives or sessions or the band cracking wise in their Scand-tastic native tongue. But, and it's a big but (fnar), what renders this edition essential is its excellent new mix: snares snap, bottom ends throb, guitars slash and you'll swear you can actually hear Mike Monroe's leather chaps can-canning past your very ears. *Motorvatin*'s great, but the title track's heartbreakingly good.

Ian Fortnam

BEST OF THE REST

Other reissues out this month.

Del Shannon

Stranger In Town EDSEL/DEMON

An astonishing, nicely-annotated 302-track 12-CD box from Michigan's ever-overlooked soda-pop rock'n'roll-era also-ran. Economising? Download fairground favourite *Runaway* (disc one) and psych-pop quasar *I Think I Love You* (disc six), and you'll get the gist. **8/10**

Inspiral Carpets

The Complete Singles MUTE/BMG

Curiously coiffed, Madchester co-opted, organ-driven psych-poppers the Inspirals were responsible for some of the finest tunes during indie's late 80s/early 90s chart ram-raid and here they are again remastered, double vinyled and 3CDed with remixes. Sound. **7/10**

Steve Hillage

LA Forum 31.1.77 MADFISH

Though recorded in relative lo-fidelity, sourced as it is from Hillage's personal archives, this 70-minute live set finds the former Gong wunderkind on fine fluid form, mainly spotlighting material from 1976's *L* while road-testing *Motivation Radio*'s *Not Fade Away (Glid Forever)*. **7/10**

Various

Too Much Sun Will Burn: Brit Psych '67 Vol. 2 GRAPEFRUIT

Well, there's really nothing wrong here. The sun's in the sky, the micro-dot's on the tongue, and everyone present (Traffic, Flower Pot Men. Pete 'n' Dud et al) are aspiring to the outer limits of Beatle-inspired baroque-pop. Leaves you aching for summer. Summer '67, that is. **8/10**

Flaming Lips

2 vinyl EPs WARNER BROS

A *Yoshimi*-era duo of EPs (*Fight Test* and *Ego Tripping At The Gates Of Hell*) from Wayne Coyne's enduring Oklahoma quirksters debut on vinyl in red and green respectively. Kylie gets covered while Cat Stevens pockets 75% of *Father & Son* soundalike *Fight Test*.
Both 7/10

Jefferson Starship

Performing Jefferson Airplane At Woodstock FLOATING WORLD

A post-Slick Starship entertain a whooping throng of Boomers in '09. Cathy Richardson's blues-steeped baying overshoots the runway somewhat and the mix is a bit off-kilter, but it's got *White Rabbit* and *Somebody To Love* on it. Squint hard enough and it'll almost do. **5/10**

The Bug Club

2 reissues WE ARE BUSY BODIES

They are, by their own admission, a 'Welsh indie/garage-pop sensation', so why haven't you already got their first two albums? Excellent question, because they're irrefutably fab. Imagine a Merseybeat Velvets with none of the intrinsic neuroses. Bafflingly irresistible. **Both 8/10**

Telex

Box Set MUTE

Defined by '79 futurist dance-floor filler, *Moskow Diskow* – a vital bridge between Kraftwerk and arguably all subsequent EDM – Belgium electro pioneers Telex have all six albums (not least 1981's Sparks-enhanced *Sex*) newly boxed on Mute. New Beat's ground zero. **7/10**

Various

Cherry Stars Collide: Dream Pop, Shoe Gaze, Ethereal Rock 1986-1995 CHERRY RED

Dream Pop, eh... Whatever did we do to deserve that? Anyway, here for your delectation, four discs of heavy-lidded, slope-shouldered, shoe-gazing aural opioids. Cocteau Twins too hardcore for you? Try the Cranes. Insomnia? Bung Low on, you'll be off in seconds. **6/10**

Stranglers

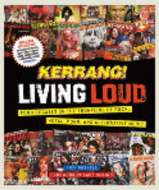
Feline 40th Anniv. BMG

The Stranglers' seventh (now nicely expanded with B-sides, edits and its bonus 7-inch on CD2) was a deal-breaker for many on its initial release. Five years on from their defining *Rattus Norvegicus* debut it was an exercise in maturity and restraint. Still boring? A bit. **6/10**

BEST OF THE REST REVIEWS BY IAN FORTNAM

THE HARD STUFF
STUFF
BOOKS & DVDs

Kerrang! Living Loud:
Four Decades On The Frontline Of Rock, Metal, Punk, And Alternative Music
Nick Ruskell *DK*



A lovingly crafted history of the onomatopoeic rock weekly.

In his acknowledgements page, the author of this beautifully presented, weighty coffee-table celebration of the magazine he has called home for the past 20 years renames his job title of Senior Commissioning Editor as 'Full-Time Metal Fan'. This small detail tells you all you need to know about the magazine's appeal and its place at the heart of 40 years of rock history. While other – desperate to be cooler – music weeklies sneered at and patronised the metal community, *Kerrang!* was written by those who loved the music and used their position to champion and nurture the bands, creating a sense of community well ahead of the internet age.

It's this "us against the world" sense of camaraderie that has engendered a sense of loyalty and mutual respect between the magazine and some of the biggest names in heavy music, many of whom have lined up to pay tribute here. Lars Ulrich waxes lyrical of Metallica's relationship with *K!* in his foreword, while everyone from Judas Priest's Rob Halford to Guns N' Roses' Duff McKagan and Biffy Clyro's Simon Neil share their memories of the mag, both as readers and its subject matter.

It's a whirlwind tour of the last four decades of heavy music, with all the highs and lows, moments of triumph and tragic losses. Interestingly, given the current rumblings about the impending death of rock'n'roll, it also makes it clear that doomsayers were predicting metal's demise as early as the mid-80s, which clearly turned out to be utter guff then and will presumably continue to be total bollocks going into the next decade. World affairs outside of the rock bubble, meanwhile, are brought into focus from within the scene, such as writer Ben Myers's account of being stuck in the United States with Blink 182 on 9/11. On a more fun note, meanwhile, the mayhem of the mag's awards – which staffers pride as the most debauched night of the year – is detailed with uncontained glee.

This is a gorgeous love letter to the club every rock kid wanted to be a member of, and thanks to the enthusiasm of its writers and photographers, absolutely felt like they belonged to. The UK rock landscape would look very different if *K!* had never existed, and Ruskell's book is a glorious look back at the words and pictures that helped to shape and document the careers of the bands and the lives of the readers, and is essential for those who grew up in the comforting embrace of its pages.

Emma Johnston

The Rolling Stones
Grrr Live! *MERCURY/UMG*

Previously unreleased 50th-jaunt highlight.

Celebrating their half century in 2012 with the *Grrr!* compilation and *50 & Counting* US (then European) tours, the Stones' career-straddling pay-per-view set at Newark, New Jersey's Prudential Center on December 15 manifests on triple vinyl and CD/Blu-Ray.

Although joined by Springsteen (*Tumbling Dice*), Lady Gaga (*Gimme Shelter*) and The Black Keys (Bo Diddley's *Who Do You Love?*), Mick Taylor provides the most momentous guest performance on an epic *Midnight Rambler*. Departures from trusty set-pieces (then still including *Brown Sugar* graced by Bobby Keys' sax solo) include Freddie King's *I'm Going Down* (with John Mayer and Gary Clark Jr.), time-stopping *Wild Horses* and the rousing "lost" state-of-the-nation single *Doom And Gloom*.

Keith's spot elevates with *Happy* and *Before They Make Me Run* while Charlie Watts' featherlight propulsion shines throughout, consummating the set doubling as definitive tribute to the fallen drummer.

A worthy addition to any Stones collection.

Kris Needs

King's Road
Max Decharne *OMNIBUS*

Razor-sharp history of London's coolest rock route.

Long before the Rolling Stones and the Sex Pistols stepped out in Chelsea, it was 'The Hippest Street in the World' and everything culturally exciting was magnetically drawn to its epicentre, the King's Road. Author Max Decharne, formerly of Gallon Drunk and Flaming Stars, has pulled off a towering feat in expanding this epic, first published in 2005. Such forensic research could result in a shapeless mass but the threads linking the cultural hotspots and characters are so skilfully woven, we can follow a beatnik student nicknamed 'Talcy Malcy' Edwards who changes his surname to McLaren and opens the Let It Rock boutique. John Peel, Mick Farren and Cynthia Plaster Caster are among the first-rate insider voices. *Classic Rock* readers might skip the theatrical sections but the impeccably suave Decharne has a knack for ferreting out clippings poking fun at would-be groovers. Essential for swingers and squares alike.

Claudia Elliott

Manfred Mann's Earth Band In The 1970s
John Van Der Kiste

SONICBOND PUBLISHING

Thorough account of the prog band who hit the pop heights.

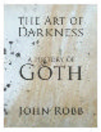
The South-African born Manfred Sepse Lubowitz, aka Manfred Mann, is one of pop music's more reticent characters, who at some level you feel considered himself luckless to have achieved pop success rather than be exalted for his musical chops. He was rather scornful of songs like *Do Wah Diddy Diddy*, one of a string of hits he attained with the 60s beat combo named after him.

Come the 1970s, and having acquired a mini-Moog synthesizer, he was determined to put such childish things behind him. With his Earth Band, he devised arrangements of Holst's *The Planets*, calculated to elevate the common man. Once again, however, he found himself to his surprise topping charts with a version of Bruce Springsteen's *Blinded By The Light*. Van Der Kiste's account is detailed, for fan's only perhaps but does highlight interesting aspects to the group, such as their pioneering ecological awareness.

David Stubbs

The Art Of Darkness: A History Of Goth
John Robb *LOUDER THAN WAR*

This year's 80s goth revival gathers pace.



With a new album from The Cure imminent, an extensive Batcave nightclub compilation boxset (see CR312) out now, The Cult's *Love* reissued, Siouxsie, Fields Of The Nephilim on tour this summer, and another goth tome from ex-*Melody Maker* writer Cathi Unsworth en route, it's a topical morose and gloomy return to the genre created by the

flamboyance of glam filtered through the minimalism of punk. A genre that no band ever admitted to being part of in the 80s. Which, incidentally, does hobble Membranes bassist and writer John Robb's ability to deliver a fully detailed history of goth. The Cure's Robert Smith, Siouxsie, and the Sisters' Eldritch are all on record as historically deriding or denying the goth tag. As such, the archival or borrowed band interviews act as individual bios rather than interviews performed with the express purpose of providing an over-arching narrative of the genre.

At over 500 pages, *The Art of Darkness* is wildly ambitious in scope but at the same time, by no means an exhaustive history of goth, failing to bringing the genre fully up to date with current bands.

Robb understands the importance of goth as a subcultural style, but the book gets bogged down – with goth's pre-history, roots, assorted eighties bands on its fringes, and its multiple influences – rather than focusing on the core bands, albums and songs.

Alex Burrows

Pink Floyd And The Dark Side Of The Moon: 50 Years

Martin Popoff MOTORBOOKS

The album that simply keeps on giving.

If all the words that have been written about *The Dark Side Of The Moon* were laid end to end, they would stretch a long way towards that Earth-orbiting satellite. Yet still they keep on coming. And here come a few thousand more (certainly not the last) in its 50th anniversary year.

First off, there's nothing new (which would be as difficult as it would unlikely) here, so Floyd obsessives can look away now. That said, Martin Popoff has put together an engaging *My First Dark Side Of The Moon Book* affair, with the well-known story partly woven into chapters on such as profiles of the main characters, pre-*DSOTM*, recording, production and equipment, individual tracks, touring the record, post-*DSOTM*. Lots of images (some less interesting – a fuzz box, an array of VU meters, an Avis van-rental ad – than others) break up the text, helping to make this an easy and informative read for anyone who might be coming to this remarkable story of a truly remarkable rock record for the first time.

Paul Henderson

Meet Me In The Bathroom

A Film by Dylan Southern and Will Lovelace

The Millennial New Wave Of New York New Wave movie.

Inspired by Lizzy Goodman's excellent book of the same name, this nicely cut feature from London-based *Blur: No Distance Left To Run* directors Southern and Lovelace chronicles the rise and fall of NYC's last great grass roots rock scene. Emerging from the numb nothingness of New York's DJ-oriented bar culture nineties, bands like The Strokes, Yeah Yeah Yeahs, Moldy Peaches and Interpol were just finding their feet and fanbases when the events of 9/11, quite literally, changed everything. An exodus from Manhattan to Brooklyn hothoused the fecund, if often derivative, scene while early, heavily inky-media-hyped UK tours garnered record deals and reputations for the bands.

Even as its second wave broke (LCD Soundsystem, The Rapture) the scene was already teetering on the brink of free-fall: the newly fractured Strokes were having trouble birthing a difficult second; Napster's arrival impacted Interpol's debut album release; gentrification priced the protagonists out of Brooklyn and Yeah Yeah Yeahs' vocalist Karen O suffered a nightmare fall in Sydney. While a combo of audio interviews and contemporaneous archive footage, the verité clips of 9/11 playing out are particularly chilling as an ordinary humdrum day spirals steadily toward unimaginable horror, this engaging documentary is (Strokes' bangers aside) remarkably short on actual hits, earth-shattering tunes that'll send you on a post-screening Spotify safari. Does a scene solely based on the merits of a single band genuinely qualify as a scene at all? Whatever, everyone's thin, looks cool, dresses sharp and there's heroin involved, so when push comes to shove, what's not to like?

Ian Fortnam

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SAT 06 MAY EMSWORTH KINGS ARMS
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THU 18 MAY FARNHAM THE MALTINGS
FRI 19 MAY SHEFFIELD CORPORATION*
SUN 21 MAY CHELSEA BLUES FESTIVAL
MON 22 MAY LEAMINGTON SPA TEMPERANCE
FRI 26 MAY STOCKTON ON TEES BLUES AT THE BAY
SAT 27 MAY SALTBURN NEW MARSKE INSTITUTE
SUN 28 MAY MARYPORT GRASSLOT CLUB
FRI 02 JUN WORTHING THE FACTORY **
FRI 30 JUN LINTON FESTIVAL
SUN 02 JUL ALFOLD ROCK AND BLUES FESTIVAL
SAT 08 JUL LONDON BUCK MOON FESTIVAL
FRI 14 JUL DARLINGTON R&B CLUB
FRI 21 JUL UPTON BLUES FESTIVAL
SUN 23 JUL MAIDSTONE MAID OF STONE FESTIVAL
SAT 29 JUL UCKFIELD BLUES FESTIVAL
SUN 06 AUG CAMBRIDGE ROCKS FESTIVAL
FRI 01 SEP DUDLEY LAMP TAVERN
THU 07 SEP TRING BLUES BAR
SAT 09 SEP CRANBROOK TOWN MUSIC FESTIVAL
FRI 15 SEP MANCHESTER ACADEMY 3
FRI 22 SEP LEICESTER THE MUSICIAN
SAT 23 SEP WOLVERHAMPTON NWOCR LIVE 2 FESTIVAL
THU 05 OCT BARNOLDSWICK MUSIC AND ARTS CENTRE
SAT 07 OCT CARLISE BLUES FESTIVAL
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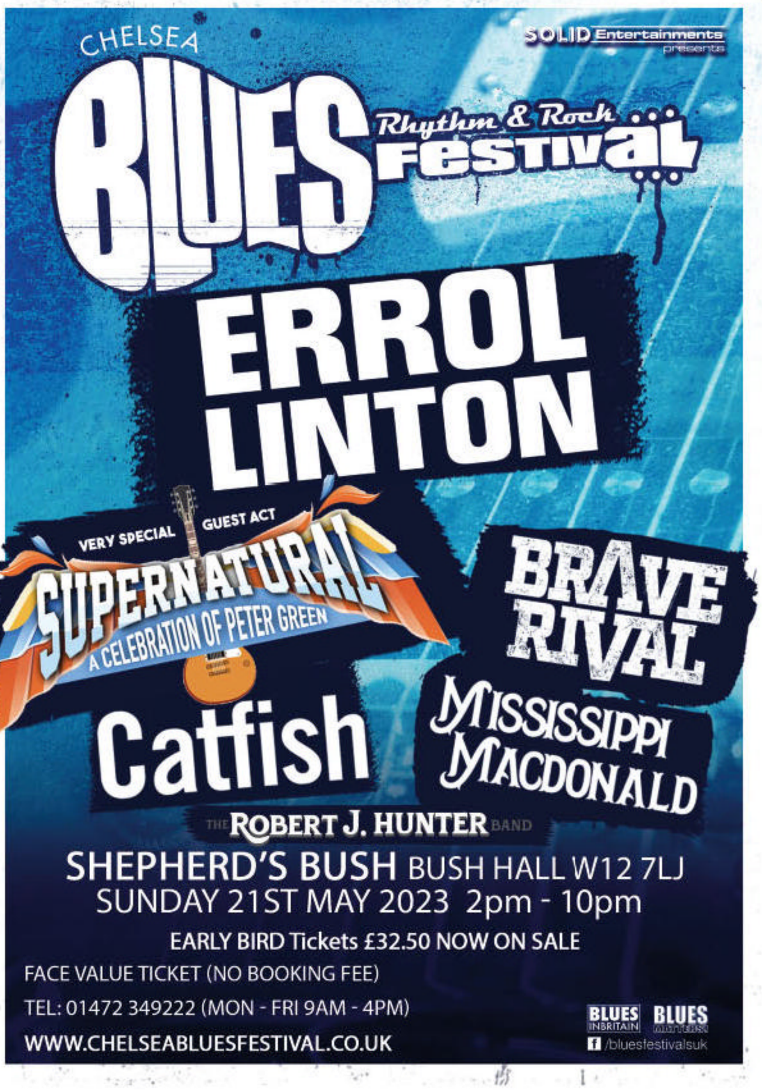
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WED 17 MAY BARNOLDSWICK Music & Arts Centre - SOLD OUT
THU 18 MAY NOTTINGHAM Rescue Rooms*
FRI 26 MAY EDINBURGH Bannermans
SAT 27 MAY GLASGOW Cathouse
SUN 28 MAY ABERDEEN Cafe Drummond
FRI 02 JUN WORTHING The Factory
SAT 17 JUN SILSDEN Town Hall
SAT 01 JUL LEAMINGTON SPA Temperance
SUN 02 JUL ALFOLD Blues Festival
SUN 23 JUL MAIDSTONE Maid Of Stone
THU 07 SEP BLACKPOOL Waterloo Music Bar
FRI 08 SEP LONDON 100 Club
SAT 09 SEP BARNSLEY Birdwell Venue
SUN 10 SEP DARLINGTON R'n'B Weekender
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SUN 26 NOV BARNOLDSWICK Music and Arts Centre
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p100

ZZ Top

Beards, beer and blues in New Zealand.

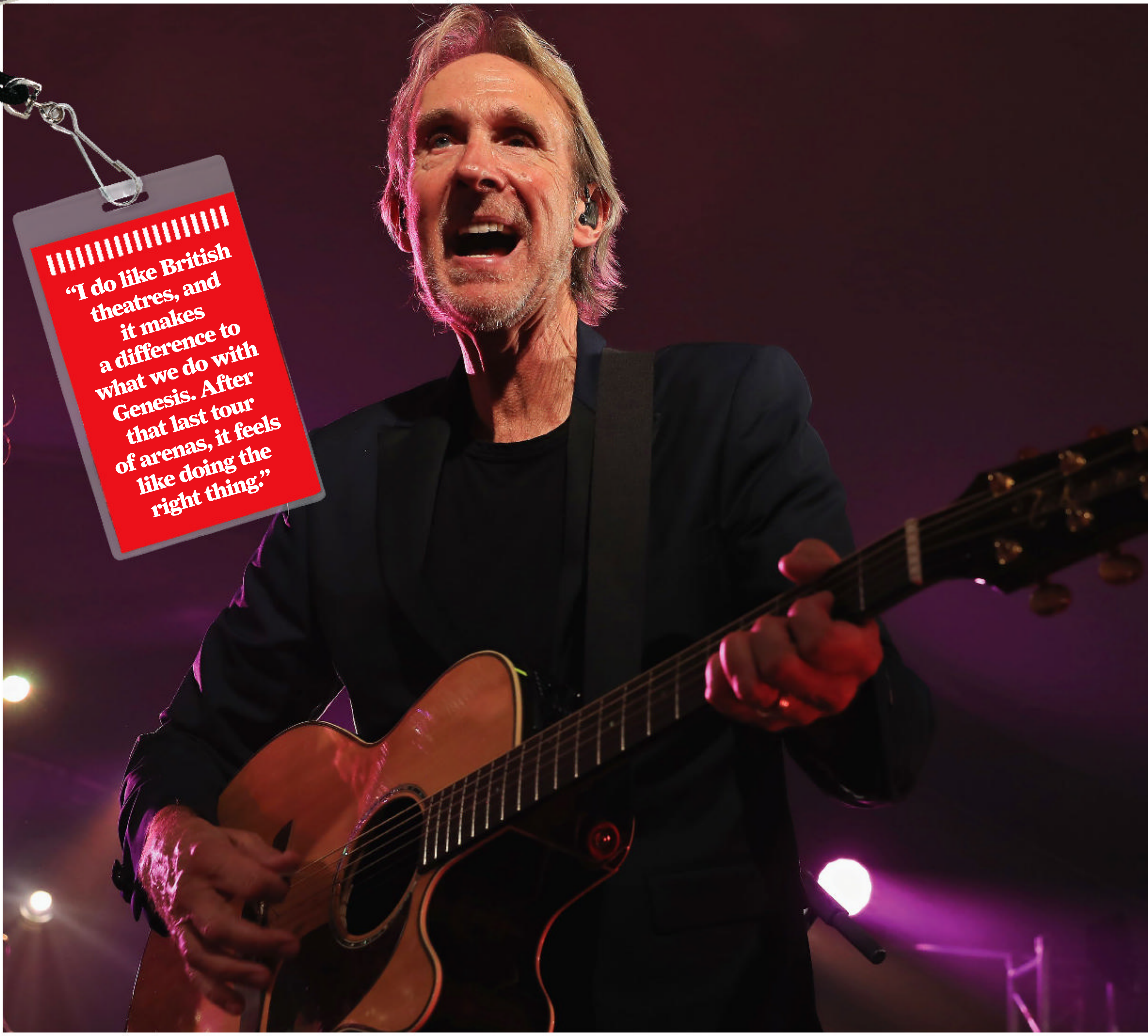
LIVE!

The High-Voltage What's On Guide

Edited By Ian Fortnam (Reviews) and Dave Ling (Tours)

p94 Interviews
p97 tour dates
p100 Live Reviews

PRESS/RADLAB



GETTY

Mike + The Mechanics

The one-time Genesis side project returns for an extensive UK tour – with some special treats in store.

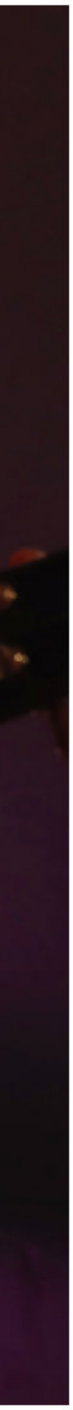
Bassist and guitarist Mike Rutherford formed Mike + The Mechanics during a hiatus from Genesis in 1985. Initially a side-project, the success of hits such as *The Living Years*, *All I Need Is A Miracle* and *Over My Shoulder* made them a bona fide group. As Rutherford launches a first tour since the dissolution of Genesis last year, he explains why a side-order of songs by his former band will feature in their set-list.

The Mechanics are about to begin a 34-date UK tour, something that not too many bands do anymore.
I'm not quite sure why it's that many. I said to my manager: 'Let's do a few shows' and this is what he came back with.

In a practical sense, what's the reason behind playing so many shows instead of maybe a handful of bigger ones?
I'd do arenas with the Mechanics if I could, but we wouldn't sell enough tickets. I do like British theatres and it makes a difference to what we do with Genesis. After that last tour of arenas, which have their own drawbacks, it feels like doing the right thing.

For this tour Nic Collins, the son of your former Genesis bandmate Phil, takes over the drum stool of Gary Wallis on a temporary basis.
Gary is having a medical treatment right about now and I was worried that he wouldn't be ready in time. He was and always will be the Mechanics' drummer but after playing with Nic for the last couple of years, it seemed like an obvious thing to ask him.

Is it just like playing with his dad?
Yeah. Quite a lot of my enjoyment from that last Genesis tour came from playing with Nic. No disrespect to Chester [Thompson, the band's additional drummer] who we have worked with for years [until 2007] but he's Chester – he drums like Chester. Bringing in Nic was a nice change. He brings



some of the things that Phil had in the first place. He understands how his dad did stuff.

The excellent Andrew Roachford is there on vocals, along with Tim Howar. They're such a versatile pair of singers.
Exactly, it's great. Roach has real soul and Tim fills that role as the rock singer. We have a lot of fun with the Mechanics and over last ten or twenty years, Roach has really helped me to relax onstage. He's so comfortable there it rubs off on the rest of us.

Are you working on a follow-up to *Out Of The Blue*, which is now almost four years old?
There's nothing actually going on at the moment, though you're right – it's been a while. Covid came along, followed by the Genesis tour. I'll be moving on a new album soon. Making records is something that I still enjoy.

You've pretty much kept Mechanics and Genesis as separate entities. This time you are adding what the press release calls "a drop" of the band that broke up in March 2022.
I've always done a couple of Genesis songs but now there will be a few more. I want to play some of the songs that weren't heard on that last tour. One that I really wanted to play during that run was *Jesus He Knows Me*. We rehearsed it and it sounded great, but we just couldn't get it in [to the set-list]. We'll do that one, definitely.

What *sort* of a Genesis song do you envisage including in the setlist?
On that last tour [from Genesis], having done it before with the Mechanics, I really wanted to include an unplugged section. I had to work quite hard in persuading Tony [Banks, keyboards] and Phil [Collins] to give it a try. And of course it worked great – so there might be some more of that.

Can you give us a flavour of the day of March 26, 2022 – the last show at the O2 Arena?
It was nice afterwards when everybody, including Peter [Gabriel] and Richard McPhail [tour manager from the seventies), was together in the dressing room. Apart from that we kept backstage closed off. But the actual show felt bizarre. I was kind of okay until I saw on my setlist that there were just four songs left. Seeing that in print made me emotional, but having got through all of the problems with Covid, it felt very good to see things through.

The tour as a whole had its challenges, including Phil Collins' health, but pretty much everyone who attended seemed to enjoy the privilege of saying goodbye to something that meant so much to them.
I tend to forget how much the music means to people's lives. For instance, we did a couple of shows in America in a city we hadn't played in thirty years and sold out both nights. It proves what a lovely reach Genesis had. There was some sadness, but I thoroughly enjoyed our last tour. It's always a joy to be onstage with Phil and Tony.

You're now 72 years old. What keeps you going?
It's the old English work ethic. But having said that, some jobs are flat-out. With this one you can do a bit less if you like. **DL**

The tour begins in York on April 12.

ANNE-MARIE FORKER

Voivod

What to expect from 40 years of the respected prog metallers.

Co-founding drummer Michel 'Away' Langevin sets the scene for an anniversary trek from the ground-breaking, veteran French-Canadian metal crew.

Congratulations on 40 years of Voivod! How does it feel to reach that milestone?
It feels absolutely fantastic. I still remember telling my parents that I was quitting university to be in a heavy metal band. Four decades later, we are still here, it's pretty unbelievable.

How would you describe the journey?
It's been a complete rollercoaster. If Voivod are remembered for anything, it will be for perseverance [laughs]. There were quite a few big obstacles along the way, including the [tour bus] crash in Germany in 1998 [in which bassist/vocalist Eric Forrest was badly injured] and the unfortunate passing of Piggy D'Amour [guitarist] in 2005. But we still have great momentum and seem to be more popular than ever.

How involved were you with the new boxed set, *Forgotten In Space*, which revisits the band's Noise Records era with splatter vinyl editions, demo recordings, a 40-page book and the mini-documentary *Chaosmongers*?
I supplied all I could in terms of demos, photographs, videos… anything I could find in the Voivod archives. It became a labour of love during the pandemic. Scanning in the old photos of Piggy was quite draining for me, so while I was wading through all of that nostalgia, it was also important to have a brand new project.

That project was *Synchro Anarchy*, Voivod's 15th studio album – released in early 2022.
I've been here all the way through, this is the fifth line-up of the band and I'm very proud of what this incarnation is achieving. Artistically, we are on fire. There's such a great chemistry.

***Classic Rock* called *Synchro Anarchy* "one of the band's finest albums", adding: "It stands as proof that a band can please the crowd and themselves as the same time". Would you say that's the goal of any artist?**
Of course. We are very lucky because Voivod fans are very loyal, they will accept all of our exploration. When we released *The Wake* [in 2018] we knew that it was really proggy and complex, but the album was embraced so well. The reviews were very positive. That was immensely satisfying.

Is there an example of a Voivod album that the fans didn't really get at the time, but then grew to love?
Oh yes. *Angel Rat*. When that one was released [in 1991] it flew completely under the radar. It didn't sell at all. But now people worship it.

Is there any news of a new album?
The details are still top secret, but I can tell you that as part of the anniversary celebrations we have recorded an album [*Morgöth Tales*] of songs from our catalogue. It'll be released in the summer.

Last November you returned to Europe as special guests of Opeth. Was that a good tour for you?
It was truly incredible. You could tell that even after all these years, some of the crowd were discovering Voivod for the first time which felt great. And we got along with the Opeth guys really, really well.

Now the band is back for four headline dates plus a festival appearance at the Prognosis Festival in London. You must be thrilled to be sharing a stage with your heroes Hawkwind.
That is going to be fantastic. Just after Lemmy died, we recorded *Silver Machine* as a tribute to him on our *Post Society* EP [2016]. This will be our first time appearing with Hawkwind. I'm so excited! **DL**

Voivod's UK dates kick off in Bristol on April 18.

> "We're not entirely comfortable with being called a pure blues band. We're pretty rock-y."

When Rivers Meet

Catching up with the award-winning blues rock duo ahead of their biggest headline tour so far.

Husband and wife bands are fascinating. For the sake of people who may be new to the band, did When Rivers Meet come along first or did things begin with the relationship?
Grace Bond: We were together for a good ten years, in separate projects. It was quite a bit later when we decided to make music together.
Aaron Bond: It just didn't occur to us at all.
Grace: We weren't even songwriters in those other projects. That didn't begin until we came together.

What happens when one partner rejects an idea from the other?
Aaron: We scrap the song and move onto the next one. That's not a problem. We're very together in everything we do.

Have you ever taken a domestic onstage?
Grace [laughing]: Ooh, that's a good question. We have domestics, don't get me wrong, but I don't think it's happened. We are united. We know that if we are not in something together then we are in trouble. So, get over it and have the other person's back.

Your band's style of soulful blues leaves a firm boot print.
Grace: We're not entirely comfortable with being called a pure blues band. That kind of music generally sounds like somebody's dog has died.
Aaron: We were heavily influenced by the blues…
Grace: …but we're pretty rock-y.

Can you name some of the ingredients that flavour the WRM pot?
Aaron: Cream and Led Zeppelin, for sure.
Grace: We're massive fans of Rival Sons because they're so rootsy and there's nothing standard about their music. That's what we try to do with the electric mandolin and slide mandolin. It's important to be a bit different.

How did it feel to get the thumbs up from blues rock maestro Joe Bonamassa?
Aaron: When he invited us onto his Blues Cruise, we were just blown away. But it was also kind of surreal. Joe is helping to keep the blues alive, isn't he? He's the king of that genre.
Grace: Joe is helping so many new artists come through. He's certainly doing his bit.

This upcoming second headline tour is the biggest so far. How would you describe the progress you've made these past seven years, and given that you self-release your music, what's been biggest hurdle?
Aaron: Like every other band, Covid was pretty hard to overcome.
Grace: We sold six and a half thousand tickets on our first headline tour, but now we're facing hurdles we didn't know existed. You need a certain person to help do this or that. It's so hard to navigate, but we have taken the decision to stay independent. We would definitely be struggling on the logistical side had we not taken on my sister as our manager.

Why did you pick New Jersey-born singer-songwriter Arielle as the tour's special guest?
Grace: We met Arielle when was supporting Beth Hart. Musically, she's an analogue girl in a digital world so we instantly clicked with her. She's right up our street.

How soon till we get a third album?
Aaron: It's being finished. There are two more weeks in the studio and we expect to release it sometime around August.

Where does it go in terms of direction?
Grace: It's a good time to answer that as we had a full play through yesterday. It still sounds like us but we have taken a good step up – a lot more heavy guitars and fuzz tones. The songs have plenty of variety.
Aaron: That was very important.
Grace: We will play two or three of them on this tour. We'd like to play them all! **DL**

The 14-date tour wraps in Manchester on May 27.

LAURENCE HARVEY/PRESS

Tour Dates

THE ALMIGHTY, BALAAM & THE ANGEL

Glasgow	Barrowland	Nov 30
Manchester	Academy	Dec 1
London	Kentish Town Forum	Dec 2

JON ANDERSON & THE PAUL GREEN ROCK ACADEMY

London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Jul 22

THE ARISTOCRATS

Glasgow	Garage	Jun 12
Newcastle	NUSU	Jun 13
Coventry	Empire	Jun 14
Bristol	The Fleece	Jun 15
London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Jun 16
Manchester	Academy 2	Jun 17
Dublin	Opium	Jun 18

ELLES BAILEY

London	King's Cross Lafayette	Apr 1
Newbury	Arlington Arts Centre	Apr 14
Bristol	Trinity Centre	Apr 15

BEAUX GRIS GRIS & THE APOCALYPSE

Sittingbourne	Music Club	Apr 27
Bruton	Magic Teapot Gathering	Apr 28
Poynton	Bluefunk Club	Apr 29
Edinburgh	Bannerman's Bar	Apr 30
Newbury	Arlington Arts Centre	May 2
Chislehurst	Beaverwood Club	May 3
Lincoln	Blues Rhythm & Rock Festival	May 6
Brecon	The Muse	May 7
Leamington Spa	Temperance Bar	May 8
Stockton	Blues Rhythm & Rock Festival	May 13

ERIC BIBB

Basingstoke	The Anvil	May 3
Pontardawe	Arts Centre	May 4
Birmingham	Town Hall	May 5
Wimborne	Tivoli Theatre	May 6
Bury St Edmunds	Apex	May 8
Bexhill-on-Sea	De La Warr Pavilion	May 9
London	King's Cross King's Place	May 11
Frome	Cheese & Grain	May 13
Exeter	Phoenix Arts Centre	May 14
Edinburgh	Queen's Hall	May 16
Glasgow	St Luke's Church	May 17
Manchester	Stoller Hall	May 19
Leeds	City Varieties	May 20
Whitley Bay	Playhouse	May 22
Wavendon	The Stables	May 23
Belfast	Mandela Hall	May 25
Dublin	Liberty Hall	May 26
Limerick	Dolans	May 28
Cork	Cyprus Avenue	May 29

BIG BIG TRAIN, DIM GRAY

Edinburgh	Queen's Hall	Sep 10
Birmingham	Town Hall	Sep 11
London	Cadogan Hall	Sep 12, 13

BIG THIEF

Gateshead	The Sage	Apr 5
Edinburgh	Usher Hall	Apr 6
Manchester	Apollo	Apr 7
Cardiff	Great Hall	Apr 8
London	Brixton Academy	Apr 11
London	Hammersmith Apollo	Apr 12

Recommended

THE BLACK KEYS

London	O2 Arena	Jun 21
Manchester	AO Arena	Jun 22
Glasgow	The Hydro	Jun 24

THE BLOCKHEADS

Cambridge	Junction	May 5
Birmingham	The Crossing	May 6
London	Gt Portland St 229 Club	May 12
Northampton	Roadmender	May 13

JOE BONAMASSA

Bournemouth	BIC	May 9
Blackpool	Opera House	May 10
Leeds	First Direct Arena	May 12
Newcastle	Utilita Arena	May 13
Birmingham	Utilita Arena	May 14

BRAVE RIVAL

London	Putney Half Moon	Apr 6
Hook	Echo Hotel Music Club	Apr 15
Bosworth	Blues Festival	May 7
London	Chelsea Blues Festival	May 21

Stockton-on-Tees	Blues On The Bay	May 26
Saltburn	New Marske Institute	May 27
Maryport	Grasslot Club	May 28
Darlington	R&B Club	Jul 14
Tring	Blues Bar	Sep 7

BRITISH LION, STRAY

Manchester	Rebellion	Jun 29
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Jul 2

DANNY BRYANT

Hartlepool	South Durham WMC	May 27

CAMEL

Manchester	Apollo	Jun 2
Edinburgh	Usher Hall	Jun 3
Dublin	Vicar Street	Jun 4
Southampton	Guildhall	Jun 6
Aylesbury	Friars Waterside	Jun 7
Birmingham	Symphony Hall	Jun 8
London	Hammersmith Apollo	Jun 10

CANNIBAL CORPSE

Bristol	Academy	Apr 18
Glasgow	Barrowland	Apr 19
Manchester	Academy	Apr 21
London	Kentish Town Forum	Apr 22
Nottingham	Rock City	Apr 23

CARDINAL BLACK

Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	Apr 12
Manchester	Academy 3	Apr 13
Bristol	Trinity	Apr 19
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Apr 20
Guildford	Boileroom	Apr 26
London	Islington Assembly Hall	Apr 27
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	May 4
Hull	The Social	May 5
Glasgow	Room 2	May 6
Newcastle	Anarchy Brewing Co	May 7
Chepstow	Castle	Aug 24

HUGH CORNWELL

Belfast	Black Box	Apr 12
Dublin	Pepper Canister	Apr 13
Galway	Roisin Dubh	Apr 14
Cork	St Luke's	Apr 15
Birmingham	Institute	May 5
Manchester	Academy	May 6
Sheffield	Academy	May 7

CORROSION OF CONFORMITY

Dublin	Academy	May 1
Glasgow	Garage	May 2
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	May 3
Cardiff	The Globe	May 4
Manchester	Bread Shed	May 5
London	Camden Desertfest	May 6

THE DAMNED, THE NIGHTINGALES

Nottingham	Rock City	Apr 4
Liverpool	Academy	Apr 5
Newcastle	NX	Apr 7
Glasgow	Academy	Apr 8
Leeds	Academy	Apr 10
Manchester	Albert Hall	Apr 11
Birmingham	Town Hall	Apr 13
Bristol	Academy	Apr 14
Norwich	The Nick Rayns	Apr 15
Brighton	Dome	Apr 17
Southampton	Guildhall	Apr 18
London	Alexandra Palace Theatre	Apr 20, 21

DEF LEPPARD, MÖTLEY CRÜE

Sheffield	Bramall Lane	May 22
London	Wembley Stadium	Jul 1
Lancashire	Lytham Festival	Jul 2
Dublin	Marlay Park	Jul 4
Glasgow	Hampden Park	Jul 6

DEPECHE MODE

London	Twickenham Stadium	Jun 17

DURAN DURAN

Manchester	AO Arena	Apr 29
London	O2 Arena	May 1, 2
Leeds	First Direct Arena	May 4
Birmingham	Utilita Arena	May 5
Dublin	3 Arena	May 7

ELIXIR, TRESPASS

London	Stratford Cart & Horses	May 27

EMPYRE

Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Apr 22
Swansea	Station 18 Festival	Apr 30
Kettering	Arts Centre	May 20
Bournemouth	Loverocks Festival	Jun 2, 3
Ebbw Vale	Steelhouse Festival	Jul 30

ROCK RECOMMENDS

BILLY F GIBBONS

The ZZ Top mainman gets hot, blue and maybe righteous with his new power trio. Songs? Guests? Expect the unexpected.

See below for dates. Currently July 2 to July 11.

SAMANTHA FISH, JESSE DAYTON

Sunderland	The Fire Station	Oct 19
Glasgow	Barrowland	Oct 20
Manchester	The Ritz	Oct 21
Bristol	SWX	Oct 22
York	Barbican	Oct 24
Cambridge	Junction	Oct 25
Bournemouth	Academy	Oct 26
Bexhill-on-Sea	De La Warr Pavilion	Oct 27
Birmingham	Institute	Oct 28

THE FLAMING LIPS

London	Limehouse Troxy	Apr 25
London	Hammersmith Apollo	Apr 28
Manchester	Apollo	Apr 29

FM, TYKETTO, DARE

Glasgow	Garage	May 11
Newcastle	Riverside	May 12
Nottingham	Rock City	May 13
Barnsley	Birdwell Venue	May 14
Hull	The Welly	May 16
Buckley	Tivoli	May 18
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	May 19
Newport	The Neon	May 20
Manchester	Academy 2	May 21
Southampton	1865	May 23
Norwich	Epic Studios	May 24
London	Islington Academy	May 25

FOCUS

Bury	The Met	Apr 12
Glasgow	The Ferry	Apr 13
Gateshead	The Sage	Apr 14
Haslemere	Hall	Apr 15
Dover	Booking Hall	Apr 16
Wavendon	The Stables	Apr 18
Cardiff	Earl Haig Club	Apr 19
London	Shepherd's Bush Bush Hall	Apr 20
Gloucester	Guildhall	Apr 21
Chichester	Assembly Rooms	Apr 23
Chislehurst	Beaverwood Club	Apr 24
New Brighton	Floral Pavilion	Jun 28
Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	Jun 29
Tavistock	The Wharf	Jun 30
Surrey	Alford Rock & Blues Festival	Jul 1

JOHN FOGERTY, HEARTY HAR

Manchester	AO Arena	May 25
London	O2 Arena	May 29

HENRIK FREISCHLADER

Worthing	Factory	May 2
Manchester	Academy 3	May 3
Edinburgh	Voodoo Rooms	May 4
Hartlepool	South Durham Social Club	May 5
Lincoln	Blues, Rhythm & Rock Festival	May 6
Bilston	Robin 2	May 7
London	Oxford Street 100 Club	May 9

PETER GABRIEL

Birmingham	Utilita Arena	Jun 17
London	O2 Arena	Jun 19
Nottingham	Motorpoint Arena	Jun 20
Glasgow	The Hydro	Jun 22
Manchester	AO Arena	Jun 23
Dublin	3 Arena	Jun 25

BILLY F GIBBONS

London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Jul 2
Birmingham	Academy	Jul 3
Bournemouth	Academy	Jul 11

GINGER PLAYS THE WILDHEARTS (UNPLUGGED)

Crumlin	The Patriot	Apr 14
Milton Keynes	Craufurd Arms	Apr 28
Guildford	Boileroom	Apr 30
Chesterfield	Real Time	May 7
Bradford	Nightrain	May 12
Blackpool	Waterloo Music Bar	May 21
Edinburgh	Bannerman's Bar	Jun 9
London	West Hampstead Arts Club	Jun 17, 22
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Jul 8
Sheffield	The Greystones	Sep 22

GOO GOO DOLLS, THOSE DAMN CROWS

Dublin	Vicar St	Jun 13
Birmingham	Institute	Jun 15
Bristol	Academy	Jun 16
Bournemouth	Academy	Jun 17
Nottingham	Rock City	Jun 19
Glasgow	Academy	Jun 20
Sheffield	Academy	Jun 22
Manchester	Academy	Jun 23
London	Brixton Academy	Jun 24

MYKE GRAY'S SKIN

Blackpool	Waterloo Music Bar	Aug 18
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Aug 19
Gravesend	Red Lion	Aug 20

KEN PUSTELNIK'S GROUNDHOGS

Kendall	Blues, Rhythm & Rock Festival	May 27
Glasgow	Blues, Rhythm & Rock Festival	May 28
Grimsby	Yardbirds	May 29
Penzance	The Acorn	Aug 12

GUN

Dundee	Beat Generator	Apr 6
Bathgate	Dreadnought Rock	Apr 7
Paisley	Bungalow	Apr 9
Stoke-on-Trent	Eleven	Apr 13
Raynes Park	Cavern	Apr 14
Dover	Booking Hall	Apr 15
Gravesend	Red Lion	Apr 16
Manchester	Night & Day Café	Apr 17
Norwich	Waterfront	Apr 19
Brighton	The Albert	Apr 20
Southend-on-Sea	Chinnerys	Apr 21
Milton Keynes	Craufurd Arms	Apr 22
London	Oxford Street 100 Club	May 5

GUNS N' ROSES

Glastonbury	Festival	Jun 24
Glasgow	Bellahouston Park	Jun 27
London	Hyde Park BST Festival	Jun 30

HAWKWIND

Manchester	Academy	Apr 28
Nottingham	Rock City	Apr 29
Durham	Northern Kin Festival	Apr 30
Truro	Hall For Cornwall	Jun 16
Chepstow	Castle	Aug 28

JOEL HOEKSTRA & BRANDON GIBBS

Edinburgh	Bannerman's Bar	Apr 11
Glasgow	Ivory Blacks	Apr 12
London	Camden Underworld	Apr 13
Norwich	Brickmakers	Apr 14

JOBY SESSIONS

Ipswich	Music Room	Apr 15
Newport	Patriot	Apr 16
Cannock	The Station	Apr 18
Newcastle	Trillians	Apr 19
Grimsby	Yardbirds	Apr 20
Oldham	Whittles	Apr 21
Ballymena	Diamond Rock Club	Apr 22
Dublin	Grand Social	Apr 23

HOLLYWOOD VAMPIRES, THE TUBES, SEETHER

Scarborough	Open Air Theatre	Jul 5
Swansea	Arena	Jul 7
Manchester	AO Arena	Jul 8
London	O2 Arena	Jul 9
Birmingham	Utilita Arena	Jul 11
Glasgow	The Hydro	Jul 12

CHRIS HOLMES

Newport	The Patriot	Jun 16
Buckley	Tivoli	Jun 17
Edinburgh	Bannerman's Bar	Jun 18
Newcastle	Trillians	Jun 22
Northampton	Black Prince	Jun 23
London	Tufnell Park Boston Music Room	Jun 24
Blackpool	Waterloo Music Bar	Jun 25

THE HU

Southampton	Guildhall	Jun 10
Donington Park	Download Festival	Jun 11
Liverpool	Academy	Jun 13
Bristol	Academy	Jun 14
Norwich	UEA	Jun 21
Glasgow	Academy	Jun 22
Newcastle	NX	Jun 23

GLENN HUGHES, THE DAMN TRUTH

Holmfirth	Picturedrome	Oct 10
Southampton	1865	Oct 12
Bexhill-on-Sea	De La Warr Pavilion	Oct 13
Nottingham	Rock City	Oct 15
Newcastle	Boiler Shop	Oct 17
Glasgow	QMU	Oct 20
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Oct 21
Bury St Edmunds	The Apex	Oct 23
London	Camden Electric Ballroom	Oct 25
Frome	Cheese & Grain	Oct 28
Manchester	Academy	Oct 29

Recommended

IRON MAIDEN

Dublin	3 Arena	Jun 24
Glasgow	The Hydro	Jun 26
Leeds	First Direct Arena	Jun 28
Manchester	AO Arena	Jun 30
Nottingham	Motorpoint Arena	Jul 3
Birmingham	Utilita Arena	Jul 4
London	O2 Arena	Jul 7, 8

THE JAYHAWKS

London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Apr 24

JETHRO TULL

London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	May 23

LAURENCE JONES

Cork	Rory Gallagher Festival	Jun 2
Worthing	The Factory	Jun 29
Alford	Rock & Blues Festival	Jun 30

KIRA MAC

Chester	Live Rooms	May 17
Blackpool	Waterloo Music Bar	May 18
Glasgow	G2	May 19
Sheffield	Corporation	May 21
Southampton	1865	May 30
Bristol	Thekla	May 31
Birmingham	Asylum	Jun 2
Stoke-on-Trent	Sugarmill	Jun 3
London	Highbury Garage	Jun 4

JIM KIRKPATRICK

Raynes Park	Cavern	May 4
Poynton	Blue Funk	May 5
Market Bosworth	Rockers Reunited Festival	May 7
Cleveland	Blues At The Bay	Jul 7

KISS, SKINDRED, THE WILD THINGS

Plymouth	Argyle Home Park	Jun 3
Birmingham	Resorts World Arena	Jun 5
Newcastle	Utilita Arena	Jun 6
London	O2 Arena	Jul 5
Manchester	AO Arena	Jul 7
Glasgow	The Hydro	Jul 8

KOSSOFF… THE BAND PLAYS ON

Raynes Park	The Cavern	Apr 6
Leicester	The Musician	Jun 22
Chelmsford	Social Club	Jun 23
Wavendon	The Stables	Jun 24
London	Putney Half Moon	Jun 25, Oct 15

Gravesend	Red Lion	Jul 7
Ramsgate	Red Arrows Music Club	Jul 11
Leicester	The Musician	Aug 30
Wimborne	Tivoli Theatre	Aug 31
Wokingham	Music Club	Sep 1
Raynes Park	The Cavern	Oct 12

THE LAST INTERNATIONALE

Birmingham	Institute	Apr 14
Manchester	Deaf Institute	Apr 15
Glasgow	King Tut's Wah Wah Hut	Apr 16
Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	Apr 18
Bristol	The Fleece	Apr 19
Southampton	Joiners	Apr 21
London	St Pancras Lafayette	Apr 22

JOHN LEES' BARCLAY JAMES HARVEST

Leeds	City Varieties	May 23
London	Islington Assembly Hall	May 28

THE LEMON TWIGS

Brighton	Chalk	May 27
Bristol	SWX	May 28
Glasgow	SWG3	May 29
Manchester	New Century Hall	May 31
London	Camden Electric Ballroom	Jun 1

THE LONG RYDERS

Leamington Spa	The Assembly	May 19
London	Gt Portland Street 229 Club	May 20
Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	May 21
Glasgow	Oran More	May 22
Liverpool	The Cavern	May 23
Bristol	The Fleece	May 24
Brighton	Patterns	May 25

THE MARS VOLTA, THE GENDER BENDER

Glasgow	Barrowland	Jun 16
Manchester	Apollo	Jun 17
London	Limehouse Troxy	Jun 18

RICHARD MARX (2024)

London	Royal Albert Hall	May 22

MASSIVE WAGONS, VIRGINMARYS

Portsmouth	Wedgewood Rooms	Apr 13
Cambridge	Junction	Apr 14
Bristol	The Fleece	Apr 15
London	King's Cross Scala	Apr 17
Manchester	Academy 2	Apr 18
Norwich	Epic Studios	Apr 19
Birmingham	Academy 2	Apr 21
Buckley	Tivoli	Apr 22
Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	Apr 24
Edinburgh	La Belle Angele	Apr 25

CHANTEL McGREGOR

Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	May 4
Bury St Edmunds	The Apex	May 5
Bosworth	Blues Festival	May 6
Rotherham	Parkgate Brewery Tap	May 13
Barnoldswick	Music & Arts Centre	May 17
Edinburgh	Bannerman's Bar	May 26
Glasgow	Classic Grand	May 27
Aberdeen	Café Drummond	May 28
Leamington Spa	Temperance	Jun 1
Worthing	Factory	Jun 2
Silsden	Town Hall	Jun 17
Alford	Blues Festival	Jun 2
Maidstone	Maid Of Stone Festival	Jul 23
Blackpool	Waterloo Music Bar	Sep 7
London	Oxford Street 100 Club	Sep 8
Barnsley	Birdwell Venue	Sep 9
Cannock	The Station	Oct 13
Morecambe	The Platform	Oct 21

MELVINS

Bristol	The Exchange	May 30
Glasgow	Garage	Jun 1
Newcastle	Boiler Shop	Jun 2
Leeds	Stylus	Jun 3
Manchester	Gorilla	Jun 4
Birmingham	Institute 2	Jun 5
London	Camden Electric Ballroom	Jun 6

MIDNIGHT CITY, STAR CIRCUS

Birmingham	Billesley Rock Club	Jun 2
Swansea	Bunkhouse	Jun 16
London	Camden Black Heart	Jun 17
Stoke-on-Trent	Eleven	Jun 23
Leicester	HRH AOR Festival	Jun 24
Bradford	Nightrain	Jun 30
Grimsby	Yardbirds Club	Jul 1

MIKE + THE MECHANICS

Aberdeen	Music Hall	Apr 15
Perth	Concert Hall	Apr 16
Glasgow	Royal Concert Hall	Apr 18
Edinburgh	Usher Hall	Apr 19
Gateshead	The Sage	Apr 20
Leicester	De Montfort Hall	Apr 22
Hanley	Victoria Hall	Apr 23
Liverpool	Philharmonic Hall	Apr 24
Carlisle	Sands Centre	Apr 26
Sheffield	City Hall	Apr 27

Classic Rock RECOMMENDS

SAMANTHA FISH

The American singer-songwriter and guitarist brings her genre-hopping style to the UK in October, and it'll be worth the wait.

See previous page for dates. Currently October 19 to October 28.

Buxton	Opera House	Apr 28
Northampton	Derngate	Apr 30
Manchester	Bridgewater Hall	May 1
Hull	City Hall	May 2
Bath	Forum	May 4
Basingstoke	The Anvil	May 5
Bournemouth	Pavilion	May 7
Nottingham	Royal Concert Hall	May 8
Cardiff	St David's Hall	May 10
Swansea	Arena	May 11
Eastbourne	Congress Theatre	May 12
Plymouth	Pavilions	May 14
Southend-on-Sea	Cliffs Pavilion	May 16
Oxford	New Theatre	May 17
London	Royal Albert Hall	May 18
Birmingham	Symphony Hall	May 20
Milton Keynes	Theatre	May 21
Llandudno	Venue Cymru	May 22
Guildford	G Live	May 24
Cambridge	Corn Exchange	May 25
Reading	Hexagon	May 26
Portsmouth	Guildhall	May 28

MOLLY HATCHET

Chislehurst	Beaverwood Club	Jun 29
Buckley	Tivoli	Jul 1
Bradford	Nightrain	Jul 2
Bilston	Robin 2	Jul 4
London	Oxford Street 100 Club	Jul 5
Tunbridge Wells	Forum	Jul 6
Exeter	Phoenix Arts Centre	Jul 7

IAN MOSS

Birmingham	Hare & Hounds	Jun 1
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Jun 2
London	Oxford Street 100 Club	Jun 3
Newcastle	The Cluny	Jun 7
Manchester	Dead Institute	Jun 9
Glasgow	Oran Mor	Jun 10

MUSE

Plymouth	Home Park	May 27
Huddersfield	John Smith's Stadium	Jun 20
Glasgow	Bellahouston Park	Jun 23
Milton Keynes	National Bowl	Jun 25

NAZARETH

Dunfermline	Alhambra Theatre	Apr 29
Elgin	MacMoray Festival	Apr 30

OZRIC TENTACLES, GONG

Oxford	Academy 2	Nov 17
London	Kentish Town Forum	Nov 18
Manchester	The Ritz	Nov 19
Sheffield	Academy 2	Nov 20
Colchester	Arts Centre	Nov 21
Northampton	Roadmender	Nov 23
Bristol	Academy	Nov 24
Gloucester	Guildhall	Nov 25
Birmingham	Academy 2	Nov 26
Brighton	Chalk	Nov 28
Norwich	Epic Studios	Nov 29
Bournemouth	Academy	Nov 30
Frome	Cheese & Grain	Dec 1
Liverpool	Academy	Dec 2

PARAMORE

Dublin	3 Arena	Apr 13
Cardiff	International Arena	Apr 15
Glasgow	The Hydro	Apr 17
Manchester	AO Arena	Apr 18
London	O2 Arena	Apr 20, 23
Birmingham	Utilita Arena	Apr 22

DAN PATLANSKY

Glasgow	Stereo	May 12
Cardiff	The Globe	May 13
Sheffield	Greystones	May 14
Newcastle	The Cluny	May 16
Manchester	Deaf Institute	May 17
Southampton	1865	May 18
Barnsley	Birdwell Venue	May 19
London	Camden Powerhaus	May 20

PORCUPINE TREE

Manchester	Castlefield Bowl	Jun 29

PUSCIFER

Dublin	Olympia	Jun 10
Glasgow	Academy	Jun 12
Manchester	Academy	Jun 13
London	Venue TBA	Jun 15

THE QUIREBOYS

Coventry	Empire 2	Apr 20
Brighton	Patterns	Apr 21
Dover	Booking Hall	Apr 22
Stockton-on-Tees	Georgian Theatre	Apr 27
Blackpool	Waterloo Music Bar	Apr 28
Chesterfield	Real Time	Apr 29
Cardiff	Clwb Ifor Bach	May 4
Milton Keynes	Craufurd Arms	May 5
Norwich	Waterfront Studio	May 6
Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	May 11
Glasgow	Oran Mor	May 12
Newcastle	The Cluny	May 13
Manchester	Night & Day Café	May 18
Birmingham	Castle & Falcon	May 19
Bristol	The Exchange	May 20
London	Kentish Town Forum	Sep 2

BONNIE RAITT

Dublin	Vicar Street	Jun 1
London	Palladium	Jun 3
Bournemouth	Pavilion	Jun 6
Oxford	New Theatre	Jun 7
Gateshead	The Sage	Jun 9
Glasgow	Royal Concert Hall	Jun 11
Manchester	Bridgwater Hall	Jun 14
Birmingham	Symphony Hall	Jun 15
Kent	Black Deer Festival	Jun 17

RED HOT CHILI PEPPERS

London	Tottenham Hotspur Stadium	Jul 21
Glasgow	Hampden Park	Jul 23

REEF, WHEN RIVERS MEET

Portsmouth	Guildhall	Apr 13
Northampton	Roadmender	Apr 14
Margate	Dreamand	Apr 15
Hastings	White Rock Theatre	Apr 16
Chester	Live Rooms	Apr 21
Hull	The Welly	Apr 22
Guildford	Boileroom	Apr 23

RIVERSIDE

Dublin	Button Factory	Apr 18
Glasgow	Garage	Apr 20
Birmingham	Institute 2	Apr 22
London	IndigO2 Prognosis Festival	Apr 23

GETTY

HENRY ROLLINS (SPOKEN WORD)

Bath	Komedia	Apr 4
London	Palladium	Apr 5
Manchester	Bridgewater Hall	Apr 6
Cambridge	Corn Exchange	Apr 7

ROMEO'S DAUGHTER, SWEET CRISIS

London	Highbury Garage	Sep 23

THE STEVE ROTHERY BAND, I AM THE MORNING

Manchester	Band On The Wall	Jun 9, 10

SABATON, BABYMETAL, LORDI

Leeds	First Direct Arena	Apr 14
London	Wembley Arena	Apr 15
Cardiff	Motorpoint Arena	Apr 16
Glasgow	The Hydro	Apr 18

JOE SATRIANI

Birmingham	Symphony Hall	May 12
Gateshead	The Sage	May 13
Manchester	Bridgewater Hall	May 14
Bexhill-on-Sea	De La Warr Pavilion	May 16
Glasgow	Academy	May 17

SARI SCHORR

Southampton	1865	Apr 5
Bilston	Robin 2	Apr 6
Cardiff	Acapela Studio	Apr 7
Cranleigh	Arts Centre	Apr 8
Sheffield	Yellow Arch Studios	Apr 14
Glasgow	Classic Grand	Apr 15
London	Putney Half Moon	Apr 19

KENNY WAYNE SHEPHERD

Warrington	Parr Hall	Apr 18
Edinburgh	Queen's Hall	Apr 19
Newcastle	Tyne Theatre	Apr 20
Holmfirth	Picturedrome	Apr 21
Bexhill-on-Sea	De La Warr Pavilion	Apr 22
London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Apr 23

SKILLET, EVA UNDER FIRE

Manchester	Academy	Apr 14
London	Kentish Town Forum	Apr 15

SOFT MACHINE

Leeds	City Varieties	May 26

SPACE ELEVATOR

Cambridge	Portland Arms	Apr 19
St Albans	The Horn	Apr 20
Chislehurst	Beaverwood Club	Apr 21
London	Hammersmith Club	Apr 22
Stoke-on-Trent	Eleven	Apr 23

SOUTHSIDE JOHNNY & THE ASBURY JUKES

London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Jul 7

SPARKS

Oxford	New Theatre	May 23
Liverpool	Royal Philharmonic Hall	May 24
Glasgow	SEC Armadillo	May 26
Manchester	Bridgewater Hall	May 27
London	Royal Albert Hall	May 29, 30

SPARTAN WARRIOR, TYTAN, MILLENNIUM

Newcastle	Trillians	Nov 3

BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN & THE E STREET BAND

Dublin	RDS Arena	May 5, 7
Edinburgh	Murrayfield Stadium	May 30
Birmingham	Villa Park	Jun 16
London	Hyde Park BST Festival	Jul 6, 8

SPIRITBOX, LOATHE, BRAND OF SACRIFICE

Birmingham	Institute	Jul 5
Manchester	Victoria Warehouse	Jul 6
Glasgow	Barrowland	Jul 7
Belfast	Limelight	Jul 9
Dublin	Academy	Jul 10
Bristol	Academy	Jul 12
London	Chalk Farm Roundhouse	Jul 13, 14

STEEL PANTHER, WINGER

Glasgow	Academy	May 14
Newcastle	City Hall	May 15
Manchester	Academy	May 17
Birmingham	Academy	May 18
London	Kentish Town Forum	May 20
Bristol	Academy	May 21
Leeds	Academy	May 23
Belfast	Ulster Hall	May 25
Cork	Cyprus Avenue	May 26
Dublin	Vicar Street	May 28

ROD STEWART

Plymouth	Home Park Stadium	Jun 24
Northampton	Cinch Stadium	Jun 28
Durham	Riverside	Jun 30
Bristol	Badminton Estate	Jul 2
Hull	Craven Park	Jul 4
Edinburgh	Castle	Jul 6

GEOFF TATE

Sheffield	Corporation	Jun 14
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Jun 15
Nuneaton	Queens Hall	Jun 16
Newport	The Moon	Jun 17
London	Highbury Garage	Jun 18
Bradford	Nightrain	Jun 20
Blackpool	Waterloo Music Bar	Jun 21
Buckley	Tivoli	Jun 22
Newcastle	The Cluny	Jun 23
Belfast	Mandela Hall	Jun 28
Dublin	Tramline	Jun 29

TENACIOUS D

London	O2 Arena	Jun 16

THRESHOLD, GRACE AND FIRE

London	Islington Academy	May 13

TIGERTAILZ, KICKIN' VALENTINA, STAR CIRCUS

London	Camden Underworld	Jun 3

DEVIN TOWNSEND

Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Apr 4
Norwich	UEA	Apr 5

TRIVIUM, BLEED FROM WITHIN, ORBIT CULTURE

Cambridge	Corn Exchange	Aug 23
Norwich	UEA	Aug 24
Nottingham	Rock City	Aug 25
Oxford	Academy	Aug 26
Hanley	Victoria Hall	Aug 28
Liverpool	Academy	Aug 29
Sheffield	Academy	Aug 30
Newcastle	NX	Aug 31
Edinburgh	Academy	Sep 2
Leeds	Stylus	Sep 3
Bristol	Academy	Sep 4
Folkestone	Leas Cliff Hall	Sep 6
Southampton	Guildhall	Sep 7

WALTER TROUT

Exeter	Phoenix Arts Centre	May 9
Birmingham	Town Hal	May 10
Holmfirth	Picturedrome	May 12
Sunderland	Fire Station	May 13
Glasgow	Oran Mor	May 14
Liverpool	Epstein Theatre	May 16
Cambridge	Junction	May 17
Ilkley	Kings Hall	May 18
Gateshead	The Sag	May 19
Manchester	Academy 2	May 20
London	Islington Assembly Hall	May 21

VOIVOD

Bristol	The Fleece	Apr 18
Glasgow	Slay	Apr 19
Manchester	Rebellion	Apr 20
Southampton	1865	Apr 21
London	Prognosis Festival	Apr 22

VOYAGER

London	Tufnell Park Boston Music Room	Apr 20

ROGER WATERS

Birmingham	Utilita Arena	May 31
Glasgow	The Hydro	Jun 2
London	O2 Arena	Jun 6, 7
Manchester	AO Arena	Jun 10

WEDNESDAY 13, SOUTH OF SALEM, SICK N' BEAUTIFUL

Bristol	Thekla	Apr 6
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Apr 7
London	Tufnell Park Dome	Apr 8
Glasgow	Cathouse	Apr 10
Newcastle	Riverside	Apr 11
Manchester	Club Academy	Apr 12
Blackpool	Waterloo Music Bar	Apr 13
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Apr 14
Milton Keynes	Craufurd Arms	Apr 15

WHEN RIVERS MEET, ARIELLE

Colchester	Arts Centre	Apr 28
Norwich	Waterfront	Apr 29
Brighton	Komedia	May 4
London	St Pancras Lafayette	May 6
Bristol	The Fleece	May 11
Birmingham	Asylum	May 12
Southampton	1865	May 13
Tavistock	The Wharf	May 14
Barnard Castle	The Witham	May 19
Glasgow	The Garage	May 20
Newcastle	University	May 21
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	May 25
Bradford	Nightrain	May 26
Manchester	Academy 3	May 27

THE WHITE BUFFALO, LA EDWARDS

London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Jul 14
Bristol	Academy	Jul 15

HOLLYWOOD VAMPIRES

Alice Cooper, Johnny Depp, Joe Perry and Tommy Henriksen's 'best bar band in the world' return with special guests The Tubes.

See opposite page for dates. Currently uly 5 to July 12.

Manchester	The Ritz	Jul 16
Glasgow	Academy	Jul 18
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Jul 19

THE WHO WITH ORCHESTRA

Hull	Craven Park	Jul 6
Edinburgh	Castle	Jul 8, 9
London	O2 Arena	Jul 12
Derby	County Ground	Jul 14
Bristol	Badminton Estate	Jul 16
Durham	Riverside	Jul 9
St Helens	Stadium	Jul 21
Brighton	County Ground	Jul 23

WINERY DOGS, JARED JAMES NICHOLS

Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Jun 16
Nottingham	Rock City	Jun 17
London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Jun 18

YES

Birmingham	Symphony Hall	Jun 10
Southend-on-Sea	Cliffs Pavilion	Jun 11
York	Barbican	Jun 12
Glasgow	Royal Concert Hall	Jun 14
Gateshead	The Sage	Jun 15
Liverpool	Philharmonic Hall	Jun 16
Manchester	Bridgewater Hall	Jun 18

Festivals

2000 TREES
EAGLES OF DEATH METAL, FRANK CARTER, HUNDRED REASONS, MORE

Cheltenham	Upcote Farm	Jul 6-8

ALFORD ROCK & BLUES FESTIVAL
FOCUS, BAND OF FRIENDS, JACKIE LYNTON, MORE

Alford	Springbok Estate	Jun 30-Jul 2

BLOODSTOCK FESTIVAL
MEGADETH, KILLSWITCH ENGAGE, HELLOWEEN, MORE

Derbyshire	Catton Park	Aug 10-13

CALL OF THE WILD
THOSE DAMN CROWES, GINGER & THE SINNERS, TERRORVISION MORE

Lincolnshire	Showground	May 26-28

CHELSEA BLUES, RHYTHM & ROCK FESTIVAL
ERROL LINTON, CATFISH, MORE

London	Shepherd's Bush Bush Hall	May 21

DESERTFEST
CORROSION OF CONFORMITY, UNCLE ACID & THE DEADBEATS, GRAVEYARD, MORE

London	Camden various venues	May 5-7

DOG DAY AFTERNOON
IGGY POP, BLONDIE, GENERATION SEX

London	Crystal Palace Park	Jul 1

DOWNLOAD
METALLICA, SLIPKNOT, BRING ME THE HORIZON

Castle Donington	Racetrack	Jun 8-11

FIRESTORM
KRIS BARRAS, WHEN RIVERS MEET, COLLATERAL, MORE

Manchester	Whitebottom Farm	Aug 11-13

GLASGOW BLUES, RHYTHM & ROCK FESTIVAL
AYNSLEY LISTER, KEN PUSTELNIK'S GROUNDHOGS, MORE

Glasgow	Oran Mor	May 28

HIGHWAYS
KIP MOORE, MORGAN WADE, JACKSON DEAN, MORE

London	Royal Albert Hall	May 20

LINCOLN BLUES, RHYTHM & ROCK FESTIVAL
HENRIK FREISCHLADER, THE CINELLI BROTHERS, MORE

Lincoln	The Drill	May 6

THE LONG ROAD
BLACKBERRY SMOKE, NICKEL CREEK, JON PARDI, MORE

Leicestershire	Lutterworth Hall	Aug 25-27

Recommended

MAID OF STONE
AIRBOURNE, SKINDRED, PHIL CAMPBELL & THE BASTARD SONS, MORE

Maidstone	Mote Park	Jul 22, 23

MAYORS ROCK FEST
THESE WICKED RIVERS, THE HOT DAMN!, GORILLA RIOT, MORE

Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Apr 8, 9

MIDNIGHT SUN WEEKENDER
JOHN FOGERTY, THE PRETENDERS, PRIMAL SCREAM, MORE

Stornoway	Lews Castle	May 25-27

PRIMORDIAL GENERAL MAYHEM
THOSE DAMN CROWES, SOUTH OF SALEM, MORE

Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Apr 29

PROGNOSIS
HAWKWIND, RIVERSIDE, VOIVOD, MORE

London	IndigO2	Apr 22, 23

RADAR
PERIPHERY, HAKEN, LOATHE, MORE

Manchester	BEC Arena	Jul 28-30

STATION 18 FESTIVAL
HOLLOWSTAR, THE TREATMENT, CHEZ KANE, MORE

Swansea	Hangar 18	Apr 29-May 1

STEELHOUSE
AIRBOURNE, BLACK STONE CHERRY, KRIS BARRAS, MORE

Ebbw Vale	Hafod-y-Dafal Farm	Jul 28-30

GETTY

LIVE!

Our man in NZ: the rolling hills of Gibbston, unlimited wine, and at least one toaster.

'Pat Benatar sings like a champion and rocks with considerable force.'

ZZ Top: new bassist Elwood Francis with Billy Gibbons.

Dave Gleeson of Aussie rockers The Angels: cartwheeling and pert.

Stone Temple Pilots' Jeff Gutt.

ZZ Top / Pat Benatar & Neil Geraldo / Stone Temple Pilots / The Angels

Gibbston Valley, New Zealand

Love in a pinot field: rock legends assemble in the southern hemisphere.

★ On paper, this year's edition of New Zealand's annual Summer Concert Series reads a little bit past its expiry date. The Angels and Stone Temple Pilots are both continuing to operate without the vocalists most associated with their success. Pat Benatar – or, as she's billed these days, Pat Benatar and Neil Geraldo – hasn't had a US hit since 1986. And ZZ Top, who barely paused for breath after the death of bassist Dusty Hill last July, have promoted his backline tech to frontline duty. Rock may not be dead, but on occasions like this, you fear that the dust might be ready to settle.

On a more positive note, the setting is majestic. Gibbston Valley lies 30km to the east of Queenstown on NZ's South Island, lined by the vineyards that gently climb its lower slopes. And, unlike the many festivals who treat their patrons like credit card-carrying cattle, this one actually doesn't. You can bring in your own food. And water? Water is *free*.

It's also hot. The kind of fierce, sanity-threatening heat that prompts concerned announcements from the stage recommending the liberal application of sunscreen. But hey, you can buy buckets of ice for ten bucks. Another lesson for UK festivals there, perhaps.

Pat Benatar: rocking with force.

The heat doesn't seem to bother Aussie legends The Angels. The Brewster Brothers – with almost a century of service between them – are inscrutable behind dark glasses and largely static, but frontman Dave Gleeson, the former Screaming Jet who's been fronting the band for over a decade, is a wild-eyed, temperature-defying, jackrabbit force of nature. His tongue flickers. He fixes the audience with a malevolent glare. He throws the horns. He bounces around, then lifts his shirt to reveal a pert beer belly. And at the climax of a rollicking *Am I Ever Gonna See Your Face Again?* during which the crowd respond with the time-honoured chant of *"No way, get fucked, fuck off!"* at the appropriate moments – he even throws in a cartwheel. Prior to a jubilant *No Secrets*, Gleeson tells the crowd that it's rock o'clock, and on this evidence it's hard to argue.

Stone Temple Pilots make a break for the toaster.

"This is the most beautiful place I've ever seen," says Stone Temple Pilots singer Jeff Gutt, apparently in awe of the surroundings. Crowd now onside, he proceeds to lead the band through what feels like a greatest hits set, which means there's no room for any tracks from either of the albums he's recorded with them, nor the two that preceded it. Instead, everything comes from STP's first four albums, with songs from *Core* and *Purple* doing the heavy lifting. This turns out to be a smart move, with the original menace of opener *Wicked Garden* and *Crackerman* now imbued with a rosy, nostalgic glow, while *Plush* and *Interstate Love Song* sound similarly immense. Gutt might lack Scott Weiland's propensity for chaos, but he's an affable presence – at one point delightedly pointing out that someone in the crowd is waving a toaster. Closing *Sex Type Thing*, with its thrilling, thumping riff, is a highlight.

Pat Benatar hasn't played the UK since performing four shows on the Get Nervous tour 40 years ago. And yet, here she is apologising for a mere 10 year absence from NZ (she also played this festival in 2013). Whatever the reason for her failure to appear at Heathrow passport control in the intervening years, this is not the Pat Benatar of the 1980s. Gone is the glistening production. Gone are the cheesy synths. Gone, for well-documented reasons, is *Hit Me With Your Best Shot*. Instead, she *rocks*. And she rocks with some considerable force. Neil Geraldo's guitar sounds as grungy as Dean DeLeo's did, and Benatar's voice is extraordinarily intact. From the opening *All Fired Up* onwards, it's an astonishing performance. She spends much of the set air guitaring, a mile-wide grin plastered across her face, and enthusiastically applauds her partner when he plays for real.

Hell Is For Children might lose some of its dramatic impact performed for a crowd sucking back sauvignon blanc and sushi, but there are plenty of other highlights: *We Belong*, with Benatar and Geraldo seated side-by-side at a grand piano. A rearranged *Shadows Of The Night*. *Love Is A Battlefield*. A monstrous version of *Helter Skelter*. And a climactic *Heartbreaker* that somehow segues into Johnny Cash's *Ring Of Fire*, Benatar still singing like a champion. She's a joy to watch.

For a while, it looks like ZZ Top might let it all slip away. Frank Beard – the only man on site allowed to light up away from the designated smoking areas – powers a lively *Under Pressure* from behind his tiki lounge kit, before *I Thank You*, with its relaxed, slow motion choreography, wills the momentum towards a stall. *Jesus Just Left Chicago* is soporific. Even *Gimme All Your Lovin'* feels flat. But then things begin to happen, and everything changes.

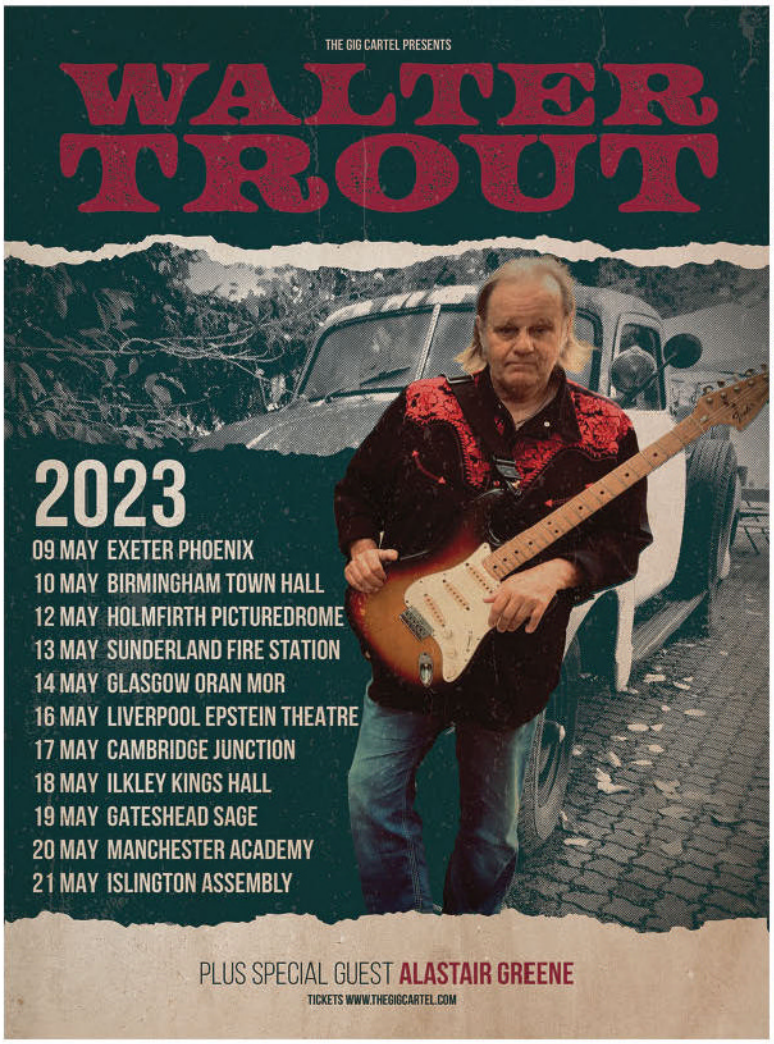
Billy Gibbons spots the toaster, which is still being waved aloft, and is clearly delighted. "A toaster!" he exclaims, as if it's a sign from above. "I guess he wants us all to get toasted!" Then he notices a sign that reads "PLEASE SIGN MY SHOES". So he clambers into the security pit, drags the owner onstage, and the band – as requested – sign her shoes. She flirts with Billy, who's suddenly no longer on auto-pilot. "Makes me wanna take the sides off this guitar," he purrs.

A colossal version of Merle Travis's *Sixteen Tons* follows. A titanic, extended version of *Just Got Paid*. During *Sharp Dressed Man*, Billy picks up a pair of panties that have been tossed onstage and carefully deposits them on the drum riser, before flipping his guitar at the climax of a one-handed solo to rub the strings against his crotch, exposing a sign that simply reads "beer". It's hilarious and weird and glorious, all at the same time. And the spinning guitars come out for *Legs*.

The night ends with a heroic *La Grange*. New bassist Elwood Francis – owner of an appropriately lustrous ZZ Top beard – starts the song rocking on the balls of both feet and ends it gleefully pirouetting on one. It's a triumph, snatched from the jaws of tedium. Proof, if it were ever needed, that even the creakiest-looking lineup can generate real electricity. And it's all over before 7pm.

Fraser Lewry

PRESS/RADLAB


THE GIG CARTEL PRESENTS
WALTER TROUT
2023
09 MAY EXETER PHOENIX
10 MAY BIRMINGHAM TOWN HALL
12 MAY HOLMFIRTH PICTUREDROME
13 MAY SUNDERLAND FIRE STATION
14 MAY GLASGOW ORAN MOR
16 MAY LIVERPOOL EPSTEIN THEATRE
17 MAY CAMBRIDGE JUNCTION
18 MAY ILKLEY KINGS HALL
19 MAY GATESHEAD SAGE
20 MAY MANCHESTER ACADEMY
21 MAY ISLINGTON ASSEMBLY
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Rick Wakeman
London Palladium

The return of the Caped Crusader.

As Rick Wakeman takes to The Palladium's stage in his trademark cape for this second of two nights there's a lot of love in the room. Proceedings open with an all-too-brief introductory flash of the Olympic standard chat that's marked him out as one of rock's greatest raconteurs ('Yes' gets a cheer, 'the seventies' a near ovation). Tonight promises choice Yes songs and a rendition of *Journey To The Centre Of The Earth* with the English Rock Ensemble and English Chamber Choir, possibly the most irretrievably seventies experience still available to modern man. Other than *Strictly Come Dancing*, obviously. But who's this bringing some much needed bluesy oomph and musical theatre sparkle to *Roundabout*? Tonight's vocalist, Hayley Sanderson is also, almost implausibly, the voice of *Strictly*. Her stridency transforms a considerably beefed-up *Wonderous Stories* (with drummer Adam Falkner also giving it particular welly), ABWH's *The Meeting* and *Fragile*'s rarely played (by Yes) *South Side Of The Sky*.

Journey stays closer to its re-recorded 2012 expansion than 1974's original, today's relatively crack ERE more than make up for the absence of orchestra and Rick's on sparkling form (*The Hansbach* being a particular stand-out). Formerly weak link vocals are transformed by the faultless Sanderson larynx, and despite Adam Wakeman's keytar refusing to work during a rousing *Starship Trooper* encore, the entire evening's an antediluvian triumph.

Ian Fortnam

'Possibly the most irretrievably seventies experience still available.'

Rick W, Hayley Sanderson and her "faultless larynx" triumph at the Palladium.

Ashley McBryde
Nashville Ryman Auditorium

Guest-heavy country hoedown yees all the right haws.

Somewhere, Dennis Linde is smiling. The late Nashville songwriting legend, known for sharp, unsentimental character studies like *Queen Of My Double Wide Trailer*, has inspired the namesake town of Lindeville that's sprouted up at Nashville's Ryman Auditorium for two sold-out shows.

Picking up Linde's torch is charismatic singer-songwriter Ashley McBryde. Like the stage manager of *Our Town*, she's both bandleader and omniscient narrator. And make no mistake, this is as much a theatre piece as it is a concert, with a set like a junior high auditorium, sleeping dogs and pirouetting kids on stage, actors planted in the audience who interact with the performers, and even a fifties-style DJ announcing songs and doing fun commercials.

Guest vocalists come and go like friendly neighbours at a barbecue, conjuring colourful townies, from crazy exes (Aaron Raitier on *Jesus Jenny*) and flirty shopgirls (Brandy Clark on *The Missed Connection Section*) to lonely hearts (Pillbox Patti on *The Girl In The Picture*) and veterans (Brothers Osborne on *Play Ball*). The set wraps with McBryde, Clark, Patti and Caylee Hammack leading a lighter-waving, singalong of Linde's classic Dixie Chicks hit *Goodbye Earl*.

McBryde's parting grin seems to say, "Y'all come back now, ya hear."

Bill DeMain

Kris Barras Band
London The Garage

Uncaged and emotional, the UK blues hard rock bunch are on fighting form.

It's the last night of their UK tour and the band is demob-happy. "We've done twenty-six dates in five fucking weeks. We sold 8,000 tickets," Kris Barras announces with evident pride. Standing on one of two raised platforms set to either side of the vocal mic, the former MMA cage fighter from Devon looks larger than life, a tattooed guitar warrior looming down from the battlements.

As they launch into *Heart On Your Sleeve*, the hipster guitarist Josiah J Manning and Kelpie McKenzie who wields a colossal-sized six-string bass as if it was a mere plastic toy, start pogoing in unison alongside Barras, driven by a headbanging beat supplied by lost-in-the-shadows drummer Billy Hammett. The 600-strong audience mimics the move and the entire venue quickly turns into a hard-rock bouncy castle.

Leaping from the stage during *Devil You Know*, Barras wades into the crowd and snaffles a baseball cap and a couple of drinks from startled punters. Back on his platform he plays a sensational extended solo at the end of *Watching Over Me*, then heads into a full-throated take on Led Zeppelin's *Rock And Roll* – not an easy song to sing. Like Moses parting the Red Sea, he divides the crowd for a final call-and-response chorus of *This Is My Parade*. "Thank you, London!" he yells. "It's been emotional."

David Sinclair

Jesse Malin
London The Garage

New Yawk City underground stalwart firing on all cylinders.

In a packed-out venue, Jesse Malin is standing atop the Garage's less than meagre bar – much to the untrammelled chagrin of security and bar staff alike – while he conducts a heartfelt singalong to a downbeat take on the Replacements' *Bastards Of Young*. Some of the sold-out crowd's contribution to musical proceedings might admittedly be a little off key, but not Jesse. Here to celebrate twenty years of his debut album *The Art of Self Destruction* he and his backing band are riveting company.

Part storyteller – he made the cash to record the record when a slum landlord gave him thousands of dollars to vacate his tiny New York apartment – part rock'n'roller: he and his band thrash through the Clash's *Rudy Can't Fail* for legendary photographer Bob Gruen (Kiss, John Lennon) who happens to be in the audience tonight, and part troubadour; a fragile take on *Broken Radio* for his dead friend Howie Pyro.

It is then, all things to all men (and a small number of women) – a celebration of musical history and of course, life. There are even a few good gags at the expense of his dad and the odd relationship snafu. It's all very good wholesome stuff, but especially brilliant in the roiling *High Lonesome* and the evocative *Room 13*, the band finally swinging out into the night on the tight bounce of *Meet Me At The End Of The World Again*; a dizzying high.

Philip Wilding

LEE WILKINSON

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Megadeth

Tokyo Nippon Budokan

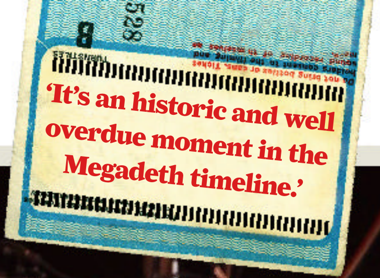
Dave Mustaine and Marty Friedman turn back the clock in Tokyo

★ Hello Marty, it's me again! You'd like to think that these were Dave Mustaine's first words to Megadeth's ex-guitarist ahead of this notable Tokyo rendezvous. This Japanese concert (packaged as *They Only Come Out At Night*) is being livestreamed worldwide, and with good reason: it marks the live return of Marty Friedman, who – having lived in Tokyo for 20 years – last performed with Megadeth in January 2000.

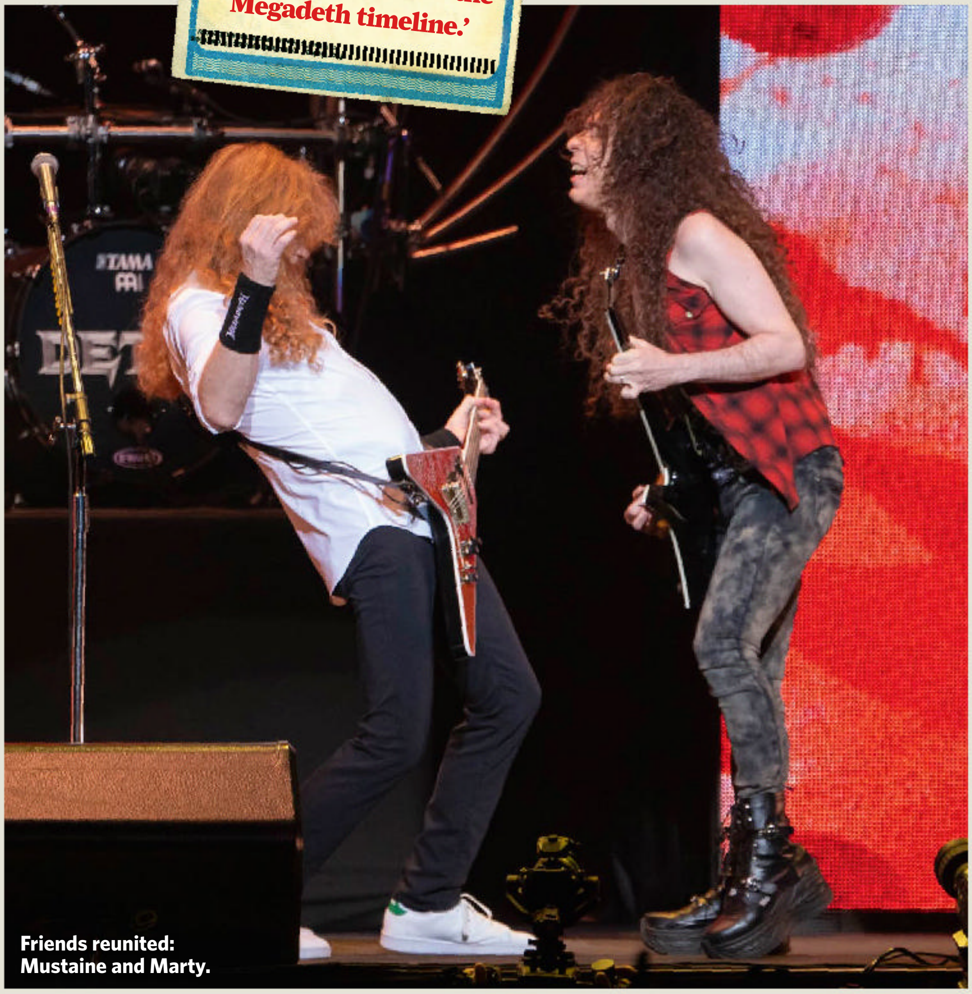
Making use of the Budokan's cavernous stage with massive screens and an epic light show, the band dive into a blistering *Hangar 18*. While tonight is ostensibly all about one man, Kiko Loureiro is Megadeth's present-day guitar god – his classy playing dazzles on *Dread And The Fugitive Mind*. Everything's going rather well until the forgettable one-two of *The Threat Is Real* (complete with intentionally controversial big-screen visuals) and *Angry Again. Sweating Bullets* and *Trust* cleanse the palate before Friedman makes his entrance.

"Please welcome my dear friend," Mustaine says, introducing the virtuoso axeman for a trio of classic songs. Unsurprisingly, his spectacularly iconic guitar solo on *Tornado Of Souls* gets the loudest cheers of the night. Should another sequel ever materialise, this won't be name-dropped in *Wayne's World 3*, but it's an historic and well overdue moment in the Megadeth timeline.

Chris Lord



'It's an historic and well overdue moment in the Megadeth timeline.'



Friends reunited: Mustaine and Marty.

Lust For Life Band

London 100 Club

Classic Iggy album reinterpreted by post-punk supergroup.

★ "It's funny, it's dirty, it's tart, it's smart", declares Katie Puckrik of Iggy's heroically hyper 1977 album as she fronts something of a supergroup, blasting through *Lust For Life* and multiple related bonuses. Drummer Clem Burke, bassist Glen Matlock and guitarist/Bowie alumnus Kevin Armstrong all worked with Iggy; they're joined by guitarist Luis Correia (Earl Slick) and keyboardist Florence Sabeva (Heaven 17). Channelling Iggy spirit with perpetual motion and a winning, committed spin on his vocal style, Puckrik leads a performance of riotous energy and no mean volume. The band are just messy enough, just tight enough, and, by the time they give us "a 100 Club moment" with a roof-razing *Pretty Vacant*, just the best funtime in town.

From the second Burke launches into that *Lust For Life* drum pattern we're in orbit, mass-hollering the call-and-response lines of *Success*, slo-mo headbanging to *Fall In Love With Me*. *"Jesus, this is Katie"*, goes their tweak of *Turn Blue* (and there's a sly subversion in a woman singing these lyrics). After the album rendition's completed, the adrenalin decides it's just getting started, and we're treated to rambunctious roars through *Five Foot One*, Blondie's *Rip Her To Shreds*, Tom Verlaine's *Kingdom Come*, Bowie's *Be My Wife* and more, climaxing with *Search And Destroy* and *I Wanna Be Your Dog*. All aboard!

Chris Roberts

An Evening With John Mitchell

London Islington Assembly Hall

The Lonely Robot shows no sign of losing battery power.

★ Covid postponements and the timing of a new release combine to confuse the branding of this show. Although billed as 'An Evening With…', John Mitchell doesn't trawl through his catalogue with Arena, *Frost, It Bites and more, focusing instead on a series of albums made as Lonely Robot.

A wonderfully fluent guitarist and capable vocalist, Mitchell's chatter is amusing and self-deprecating, and a respectably sized crowd enjoys some fabulous songs, including *God Vs Man, The Boy On The Radio, How Bright Is The Sun, Recalibrating* and the ballad *Why Do We Stay?* Having said that, it's a show that one must be a little invested in order to enjoy. Over almost two hours and with no hits to speak of, the casual observer would most likely struggle.

It's no coincidence that half of tonight's numbers are pulled from Lonely Robot's excellent 2015 debut *Please Come Home*, and Mitchell is sufficiently self-aware to introduce the hypnotic *Oubliette* as "a song from the first Lonely Robot album, before the steady decline… I'm joking – or am I?"

But he's carved an impressive career within his field of pop-conscious prog and he's backed by a strong line-up including *Frost band-mate Craig Blundell on drums, plus backing vocalist Sarah Bayley. Mitchell does what he does exceptionally well.

Dave Ling

The Black Angels

London Shepherd's Bush Empire

Psychedelic evangelists are in communion the faithful.

★ Coming from Austin, Texas – arguably the birthplace of psychedelic rock – suggests the weight of history bearing down on The Black Angels. The pie-eyed and slack-jawed wonderment of the fans gathered here tonight confirms that not only does the band have very broad shoulders, they also have the muscles to do the heavy lifting.

Approaching their 20th anniversary, the quintet have been around far longer than any of the first-generation bands that first inspired them. But it would be erroneous to assume that The Black Angels would have run of out of ideas. Their template of fuzz guitars, tremolo pedals, creepy keyboards, throbbing bass, motorik beats and tremulous vocal remains in place, but with each new album comes a refinement of their aesthetic. How else to explain the fevered reactions to pummeling readings of *Icon, History Of The Future* and the swirling *Empires Falling* that brings the main set to a breathless close?

Steadied by Stephanie Bailey's locked down grooves, The Black Angels frequently take flight as they seem to disappear into the patterned lights that strafe the venue. Dipping back into their origins with an extended encore that's akin to a second set, *Young Men Dead* and the psych-blues of *Bloodhounds On My Trail*, The Black Angels confirm their status as contemporary psychedelic avatars.

Julian Marszalek

The Soundtrack Of My Life

Nightwish frontwoman ***Floor Jansen*** on the records, artists and gigs that are of lasting significance to her.

Interview: **Hannah May Kilroy**

This year is shaping up to be a big one for Floor Jansen. Not only does it mark 10 years since the Dutch artist joined Finnish symphonic metallers Nightwish as their lead vocalist (they're currently working on their tenth album), but it's also the year that she'll be releasing her highly anticipated debut solo album, *Paragon*, a powerful, uplifting piece of work that showcases her stellar voice.

"I started writing it during the pandemic," she says. "There was so much that was negative, so much not possible, that I wanted to focus on what was possible. That was the mantra that got me through the whole thing, and in a subconscious way really integrated into the songs."

She tells us about some of the music and artists that brought her to where she is.

THE FIRST MUSIC I REMEMBER HEARING

I'm not one of those people who have a great memory for childhood things, even though I had a great childhood. But the first band that comes to mind is The Beatles; my Dad used to play a lot of The Beatles, especially on the weekends, on a Sunday. I remember the song *Honey Pie*. I could not understand it as a child. It's not great, but it's definitely memorable!

THE FIRST SONG I PERFORMED LIVE

When I was about thirteen or fourteen I joined a high-school musical, *Joseph And The Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*. So it wasn't one song, it was that musical. I shared the role of the narrator with two other girls. After that I was sold – that's what I wanted to do. I like that [musical], but musicals are often a bit too sweet for my tastes, even back then. *The Phantom Of The Opera*, *Jekyll & Hyde*, those are a little darker.

THE GUITAR HERO

I play in a band with him: that's Emppu [Vuorinen, Nightwish guitarist]. He is an amazing guitar player, but he doesn't need to fill every gap in the song with meaningless notes. He really keeps the atmosphere [of the songs]. What he plays in *Sleeping Sun* is beautiful.

THE SINGER

She falls completely out of the spectrum of rock and metal, but if there's one singer that endlessly amazes me with her sound it's Celine Dion. I find her music absolutely cheese-bombs, but that's too bad, because I love her voice. You can feel what she's singing.

THE SONGWRITER

Tuomas [Holopainen, Nightwish]. I don't know *anybody* who can write like him. He has been writing music for twenty-five years, had three different singers in his band, and still Nightwish is one of the biggest bands out there. That says something about how good the songs are. I have a special love for *Ghost Love Score* which is a super-weird song, it's ten minutes long, but for some reason, it speaks to so many people.

THE GREATEST ALBUM OF ALL TIME

It's so coloured in time. I'm forty-two, so what I thought was the best at sixteen [won't be the same now]. I can never answer that question.

MY GUILTY PLEASURE

I'll see if there's anything I listen to that people might think is weird… One of my band members loves nineties disco, and that is so far away from what we do, but I don't have [anything like] that. I do like to listen to film music when I read books. Usually instrumental. The music depends on what kind of book it is, because you still connect it together. I was listening to the music from *Inception* when I read Steven King's *Dark Tower* series. There are parts of the book that really connect to parts of the music.

THE BEST RECORD I MADE

You put so much love and energy into every song, that the moment you release the album, that's the best thing you've ever done. It always feels that way because you put everything you've learned, all the skills you have, everything you are into your latest work. So for me that would be *Paragon*, because it's the latest thing I did.

THE WORST RECORD I MADE

Probably the first [*Prison Of Desire* by After Forever]. I was eighteen when I recorded it, so we didn't know anything about writing, about recording, about singing. But your first is your first. And that also makes it very, very special.

THE SONG THAT MAKES ME CRY

Most music makes me cry! My emotions are very close to the surface. One song is *Heartless*, from Evergrey. Just some things in his lyrics that are expressed very beautifully.

THE CULT HERO

Anneke van Giersbergen. When I heard [The Gathering's] *Strange Machines* on the radio, and then went to see a concert, for me she was like an absolute role model. To sing like that in a metal band, she made me want to do that too. And I loved the way that she did it, her sound and performance and just being this fierce woman among the men.

THE BEST COVER VERSION

During the pandemic I started doing cover songs, and some of my favourites I put on YouTube. That was my only connection to the outside world. I have a young daughter, and it's really hard to get around [the film] *Frozen*. So I did *Let It Go*. It's fun to sing. I wanted to give it a mature sound, a metal twist.

THE SONG I WANT PLAYED AT MY FUNERAL

I haven't thought of it yet, to be honest. I'll cross that bridge when I get there. I just went through cancer, so I've just been thinking more about surviving.

Paragon is out now. More info at floorjansen.com

"I don't know anybody who can write like Tuomas [Holopainen, Nighwish]."

TUOMAS HOLOPAINEN: GETTY; FLOOR JANSEN: LAURA ZALENGA/PRESS

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